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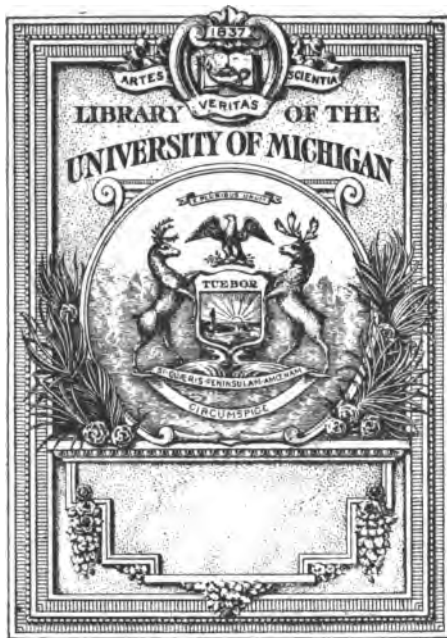
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River and Literature Series

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SHORT STORIES



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"NECK AND NECK WITH A BIG WHITE STEER"

(Page 7)

The Riverside Literature Series

SHORT STORIES

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

LEONARD B. MOULTON

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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



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PREFACE

THE stories in this collection have been chosen, as far as possible, for their portrayal of healthy human experiences that will interest those for whom the book is designed. After long experience in teaching literature to boys and girls, the editor feels that their interest should be the most important factor in determining what they are to read during the earlier part of their high-school course.

The *Suggestions for Study* are arranged under two heads, *Appréciation* and *Technique*. The questions and suggestions under *Appréciation* are designed to arouse the pupil's emotional response to what is essentially human in the story. The questions and suggestions under *Technique* are designed not merely to present the chief principles of art in the construction of the short story, but to present these principles in such a manner that they will aid appreciation and add to the enjoyment of the story.

The *Suggestions for Study* are intended to be stimulating rather than exhaustive. They leave much that may be developed in the recitation by both pupil and teacher.

The Editor and the Publishers wish to make special acknowledgment of the assistance of Mrs. B. M. Johnson of Chicago in the selection of the stories for this edition.

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE PUPILS

MUCH of your pleasure in life will be found in reading fiction, either in the form of long stories like *Silas Marner* and *Treasure Island*, or in the form of short stories such as this book contains. To find this pleasure in reading stories that are good rather than those that are poor is what is meant by cultivating a taste for good literature. There are so many stories in books and magazines that you may find it hard to choose the best. If you are in earnest about cultivating your taste or appreciation, you will be helped by asking yourself two questions: In the first place, Is the theme of the story worth while? In the second place, Is the story well written?

Nearly every kind of experience possible to human life has been made the theme of a story, but not all stories can be classed as literature. A story that may be called literature must have a theme chosen from among those human experiences that call forth in your own life feelings or emotions that are healthy. The emotion may be a feeling of resentment against what is low and mean in human life. It may be a feeling of merriment over what is humorous. It may be admiration for what is noble and true, or sympathy for sorrow and suffering. The theme of a story is worth while if it gives you a better sense of the beauty of life. The theme in a cheap, sentimental story is not one that can be made into literature. It arouses in your mind false ideas of life. Of course, you may pity *the fate of the weeping heroine* or admire the *bravado*

of the hero, who with a lucky shot brings down the villain, but the grounds for your emotions have no worthy cause. Stories with such themes are not worth while. It is not necessary that the theme should be a real experience. It may be possible, or probable, or even impossible, yet your judgment of its worth must be guided by the kind of appeal it makes to you as you read.

Perhaps a few references to the stories in this book may help you. In so simple a narrative as *Riding the Rim Rock*, the thrill of excitement that comes to you from reading the race for life is a healthy emotion. It increases your sense of life. It does you good. So, too, does the feeling of love aroused for Peroxide Jim. In *The Face of the Poor* you feel the worth of high ideals and honest motives, and your admiration for these principles is enhanced, whether you find them in the life of the millionaire or in the life of the poor fruit-vender. *Aunt Cynthia Dallett* will make you think of the kind impulses and the beautiful thoughts that common and unheroic lives may reveal. The laughter excited in *A Hamerton Typewriter* is worth while, for all innocent laughter adds zest and enjoyment to life.

When you find pleasure in the theme of a story, whether long or short, because it stimulates you to think and to act in a healthy manner and arouses in you a response to the joy or the sorrow, the humor or the pathos of life, then you may be sure that you have taken one step in cultivating your taste for good literature.

— You come now to the second question that you are to ask yourself — Is the story well written? However good the theme may be, if the story is poorly planned and poorly written, it cannot be called literature. It will take a great deal of study and long and careful

reading to master all the technical principles in the art of story-writing. You may well content yourself at first with trying to appreciate the vividness and the force with which the characters and the action are presented. This vividness or force depends largely upon the choice of words and their arrangement in the sentences. Little by little your pleasure in reading will increase, as you begin to feel the power a writer has to make his characters live in your imagination. The great writer always sets his characters before you by speech and action so that you can promptly make up your mind about their appearance and qualities of character.

These suggestions that have been given will help you appreciate all good stories, whether long or short. Although there are many other principles relating to character, plot, and setting in the long story, or novel, you need not trouble yourself about them at present. You may be interested now in some of the principles underlying the writing of the short story, so that your reading of this book may be done intelligently and with interest.

You will find an excellent discussion of the short story in Chapter X of Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction*. If this book is not in your school library, the following principles taken from that chapter may be helpful to you:—

A quotation from Poe, who was a writer of excellent stories, will give you an idea of some of the chief characteristics of a good short story. "A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thought to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents, — he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived

effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preëstablished design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction."

By making a little topical outline of this paragraph you will understand it better: 1. A single effect or impression. 2. Selection of events or incidents. 3. Importance of the introduction. (1) The short story differs from the novel because it is short. In a novel the author has time to give you a variety of impressions about the characters, and he may present them acting in many different circumstances. The short-story writer cannot do this. He must deal with a single incident, a single situation, or a section of life. He has time for only a single effect. This is called *unity* in the story. (2) Not only must the events or incidents be such as to develop a single effect, but all unnecessary details associated with them must be omitted in order that the action may progress rapidly. (3) The introduction should present the theme at once. The action should begin promptly and aim at a definite outcome. The outcome may be in the nature of a surprise, or it may be suggested, although happening in an unexpected manner.

If the story is chiefly a character study, the characters must be such that they attract attention at once. They should be unique and original or presented under the stress of some strong emotion. They cannot be commonplace, as very often happens in a novel.

The plot also must be adapted to the shortness of the story. The action must begin at once and be de-

veloped by striking experiences. Unless this is done, the effect is not strong and vivid.

The setting, or background, is often very important in the short story. The story of *Tom o' the Blue'ry Plains* could not have been written without the background of nature surrounding his life. The story of the *Chief Operator* would have been impossible without the scene of her occupation. Very often the chief interest in a story is in the picturing of the scene.

After the reading of the stories in this book is done, you should prepare five expository themes based upon the principles suggested under *Technique*. This will give you a much better understanding of the subject than you could otherwise get. These themes should be upon: Introduction; Plot; Character; Background; and Literary Style as shown in Vivid Phrasing of Scene and Action. These themes should be more than a mere stringing together of principles. A careful outline should first be prepared. Then each principle should be amplified and illustrated by references to several stories. Since the study of technique is not complete for any one story, the principles suggested should be applied to other stories, thus giving you an opportunity for original work.

SHORT STORIES

RIDING THE RIM ROCK

By DALLAS LORE SHARP

FROM P Ranch to Winnemucca is a seventeen-day drive through a desert of rim rock and greasewood and sage, which, under the most favorable of conditions, is beset with difficulty; but which, in the dry season, and with a herd of anything like four thousand, becomes an unbroken hazard. More than anything else on such a drive is feared the wild herd-spirit, the quick black temper of the cattle, that by one sign or another ever threatens to break the spell of the rider's power and sweep the maddened or terrorized herd to destruction. The handling of the herd to keep this spirit sleeping is oftentimes a thrilling experience.

Some time before my visit to P Ranch, in Harney County, southeastern Oregon, in the summer of 1912, the riders had taken out a herd of four thousand steers on what proved to be one of the most difficult drives ever made to Winnemucca, the shipping station in northern Nevada.

For the first two days on the trail the cattle were strange to each other, having been gathered from widely distant grazing-grounds, — from the Double O and the Home ranches, — and were somewhat clan-nish and restive under the driving. At the beginning of the third day signs of real ugliness appeared. The hot weather and a shortage of water began to tell on the temper of the herd.

The third day was long and exceedingly hot. The

line started forward at dawn and all day long kept moving, with the sun cooking the bitter smell of sage into the air, and with the sixteen thousand hoofs kicking up a still bitterer smother of alkali dust that inflamed eyes and nostrils and coated the very lungs of the cattle. The fierce desert thirst was upon the herd long before it reached the creek where it was to bed for the night. The heat and the dust had made slow work of the driving, and it was already late when they reached the creek — only to find it dry.

This was bad. The men were tired. But, worse, the cattle were thirsty, and Wade, the "boss of the buckaroos," pushed the herd on toward the next rim rock, hoping to get down to the plain below to water before the end of the slow desert twilight. Anything for the night but a dry camp.

They had hardly started on when a whole flank of the herd, as if by prearrangement, suddenly breaking away and dividing about two of the riders, tore off through the brush. The horses were as tired as the men, and before the chase was over the twilight was gray in the sage and it became necessary to halt at once and make camp where they were. They would have to go without water.

The runaways were brought up and the herd closed in till it formed a circle nearly a mile around. This was as close as it could be drawn, for the cattle would not bed — lie down. They wanted water more than they wanted rest. Their eyes were red, their tongues raspy with thirst. The situation was a serious one.

But camp was made. Two of the riders were sent back along the trail to bring up the "drags," while Wade with his other men circled the uneasy cattle, closing them in, quieting them, and doing everything *possible to make them bed.*

But they were thirsty, and, instead of bedding, the

herd began to "growl" — a distant mutter of throats, low, rumbling, ominous, as when faint thunder rolls behind the hills. Every plainsman fears the growl, for it usually is a prelude to the "milling," as it proved to be now, when the whole vast herd began to stir, slowly, singly, and without direction, till at length it moved together, round and round, a great compact circle, the multitude of clicking hoofs, of clashing horns, and chafing sides like the sound of rushing rain across a field of corn.

Nothing could be worse for the cattle. The cooler twilight was falling, but, mingling with it, rose and thickened and spread the choking dust from their feet that soon covered them and shut out all but the dark wall of the herd from sight.

Slowly, evenly swung the wall, round and round without a break. Only one who has watched a milling herd can know its suppressed excitement. To keep that excitement in check was the problem of Wade and his men. And the night had not yet begun.

When the riders had brought in the drags and the chuck-wagon had lumbered up with supper, Wade set the first watch.

Along with the wagon had come the fresh horses — and Peroxide Jim, a supple, powerful, clean-limbed buckskin, that had, I think, as fine and intelligent an animal-face as any I ever saw. And why should he not have been saved fresh for just such a need as this? Are there not superior horses to match superior men — a Peroxide Jim to complement a Wade and so combine a real centaur, noble physical power controlled by noble intelligence? At any rate, the horse understood the situation, and though there was nothing like sentiment about the boss of the P Ranch riders, his faith in Peroxide Jim was complete.

The other night horses were saddled and tied to

the wheels of the wagon. It was Wade's custom to take his turn with the second watch ; but, shifting his saddle to Peroxide Jim, he rode out with the four of the first watch, who, evenly spaced, were quietly circling the herd.

The night, for this part of the desert, was unusually warm ; it was close, silent, and without a sky. The near thick darkness blotted out the stars. There is usually a breeze at night over these highest rim-rock plains that, no matter how hot the day, crowds the cattle together for warmth. To-night not a breath stirred the sage as Wade wound in and out among the bushes, the hot dust stinging his eyes and caking rough on his skin.

Round and round moved the weaving, shifting forms, out of the dark and into the dark, a gray spectral line like a procession of ghosts, or some slow morris of the desert's sheeted dead. But it was not a line, it was a sea of forms ; not a procession, but the even surging of a maelstrom of hoofs a mile around.

Wade galloped out on the plain for a breath of air and a look at the sky. A quick cold rain would quiet them ; but there was no feel of rain in the darkness, no smell of it in the air. Only the powdery taste of bitter sage.

The desert, where the herd had camped, was one of the highest of a series of tablelands, or benches, that lay as level as a floor, and rimmed by a sheer wall of rock over which it dropped to the bench of sage below. The herd had been headed for a pass, and was now halted within a mile of the rim rock on the east, where there was about three hundred feet of perpendicular fall.

It was the last place an experienced plainsman would have chosen for a camp ; and every time Wade circled *the herd and came in between the cattle and the rim,*

he felt its nearness. The darkness helped to bring it near. The height of his horse brought it near — he seemed to look down from his saddle over it, into its dark depths. The herd in its milling was surely warping slowly in the direction of the precipice. But this was all fancy — the trick of the dark and of nerves, if a plainsman has nerves.

At twelve o'clock the first guard came in and woke the second watch. Wade had been in his saddle since dawn, but this was his regular watch. More than that, his trained ear had timed the milling hoofs. The movement of the herd had quickened.

If now he could keep them going and could prevent their taking any sudden fright! They must not stop until they stopped from utter weariness. Safety lay in their continued motion. So Wade, with the fresh riders, flanked them closely, paced them, and urged them quietly on. They must be kept milling, and they must be kept from fright.

In the taut silence of the starless desert night, with the tension of the cattle at the snapping-point, any quick, unwonted sight or sound would stampede the herd — the sneezing of a horse, the flare of a match, enough to send the whole four thousand headlong — blind, frenzied, tramping — till spent and scattered over the plain.

And so, as he rode, Wade began to sing. The rider ahead of him took up the air and passed it on, until, above the stepping stir of the hoofs, rose the faint voices of the men, and all the herd was bound about by the slow, plaintive measure of some old song. It was not to soothe their savage breasts that the riders sang to the cattle, but to prevent the shock of any loud or sudden noise.

So they sang and rode, and the night wore on to one o'clock, when Wade, coming up on the rim-rock

side, felt a cool breeze fan his face, and caught a breath of fresh, moist wind with the taste of water in it.

He checked his horse instantly, listening as the wind swept past him over the cattle. But they must already have smelled it, for they had ceased their milling. The whole herd stood motionless, the indistinct forms nearest him showing, in the dark, their bald faces lifted to drink the sweet wet breath that came over the rim. Then they started again, but faster, and with a rumbling from their hoarse throats that tightened Wade's grip on his reins.

The sound seemed to come out of the earth, a low, rumbling mumble, as deep as the night and as wide as the plain, a thick, inarticulate bellow that stood every rider stiff in his stirrups.

The breeze caught the dust and carried it back from the gray-coated, ghostly shapes, and Wade saw that they were still moving in a circle. If only he could keep them going! He touched his horse to ride on with them, when across the black sky flashed a vivid streak of lightning.

There was a snort from the steers, a quick clap of horns and hoofs from within the herd, a tremor of the plain, a roar, a surging mass—and Wade was riding the flank of a wild stampede. Before him, behind him, beside him, pressing hard upon his horse, galloped the frenzied steers, and beyond them a multitude, borne on, and bearing him on, by the heave of the galloping herd.

Wade was riding for his life. He knew it. His horse knew it. He was riding to turn the herd, too,—back from the rim,—as the horse also knew. The cattle were after water—water-mad—and would go *over the precipice* to get it, carrying horse and rider *with them*.

Wade was the only rider between the herd and the rim. It was black as death. He could see nothing in the sage, could scarcely discern the pounding, panting shadows at his side; but he knew by the swish of the brush and the plunging of the horse that the ground was growing stonier, that they were nearing the rocks.

To outrun the cattle seemed his only chance. If he could come up with the leaders he might yet head them off upon the plain and save the herd. There were cattle still ahead of him,—how many, what part of the herd, he could not tell. But the horse knew. The reins hung on his straight neck, while Wade, yelling and firing into the air, gave him the race to win, to lose.

Suddenly they veered and went high in the air, as a steer plunged headlong into a draw almost beneath his feet. They cleared the narrow ravine, landed on bare rock, and reeled on.

They were riding the rim. Close on their left bore down the flank of the herd, and on their right, under their very feet, was the precipice, so close that they felt its blackness—its three hundred feet of fall.

A piercing, half-human bawl of terror told where a steer had been crowded over. Would the next leap crowd them over, too? Then Wade found himself racing neck and neck with a big white steer, which the horse, with marvelous instinct, seemed to pick from a bunch, and to cling to, forcing him gradually ahead, till, cutting him free from the bunch entirely, he bore him off into the sage.

The group coming on behind followed the leader, and after them swung others. The tide was turning. Within a short time the whole herd had veered, and, bearing off from the cliffs, was pounding over the *open plains*.

Whose race was it? It was Peroxide Jim's, according to Wade, for not by word or by touch of hand or knee had he been directed in the run. From the flash of the lightning the horse had taken the bit, had covered an indescribably perilous path at top speed, had outrun the herd and turned it from the edge of the rim rock, without a false step or a shaken nerve.

Bred on the desert, broken in at the round-up, trained to think steer as the rider thinks it, the horse knew, as swiftly, as clearly as his rider, the work before him. But that he kept himself from fright, that none of the wild herd-madness passed into him, is a thing for great wonder. He was as thirsty as any of the herd; he knew his own peril, I believe, as none of the herd had ever known anything, and yet such coolness, courage, wisdom, and power!

Was it training? Superior intelligence? More intimate association with the man on his back, and so a farther remove from the wild thing that domestication does not seem to touch? Or was it all by suggestion, the superior intelligence above him riding, not only the flesh, but the spirit?

Not all suggestion, I believe. Perhaps a herd of horses could not be stampeded so easily as these P Ranch cattle. In this race, however, nothing of the wild herd-spirit touched the horse. Had the cattle been horses, would Peroxide Jim have been able to keep himself outside the stampede and above the spirit of the herd?

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

This story is an excellent example of the simplest form of narrative writing. It has been selected to illustrate two chief characteristics of all good stories. The first is action,

and the second is vividness in descriptive words. To appreciate the story you should study it in the following manner: —

First, select the words descriptive of movement and action: as, "clicking hoofs and clashing horns"; "warping slowly"; "pounding, panting shadows at his side."

Next, select the words descriptive of the herd: as, "distant mutter of throats, low, rumbling, and ominous"; "their bald faces lifted."

Next, select the words descriptive of the scene: as, "the sun cooking the bitter smell of sage"; "not a breath stirred the sage"; "no feel of rain in the darkness."

The literary quality of the story consists in the skillful use of these vivid descriptive terms. After making this careful study of action and description, you will be better able to appreciate the more complex stories that follow.

FARMER ELI'S VACATION

By ALICE BROWN

"It don't seem as if we'd really got round to it, does it, father?" asked Mrs. Pike.

The west was paling, and the August insects stirred the air with their crooning chirp. Eli and his wife sat together on the washing-bench outside the back door, waiting for the milk to cool before it should be strained. She was a large, comfortable woman, with an unlined face, and smooth, fine auburn hair; he was spare and somewhat bent, with curly iron-gray locks, growing thin, and crow's-feet about his deep-set gray eyes. He had been smoking the pipe of twilight contentment, but now he took it out and laid it on the bench beside him, uncrossing his legs and straightening himself, with the air of a man to whom it falls, after long pondering, to take some decisive step.

"No; it don't seem as if 't was goin' to happen," he owned. "It looked pretty dark to me, all last week. It's a good deal of an undertakin', come to think it all over. I dunno's I care about goin'."

"Why, father! After you've thought about it so many years, an' Sereno's got the tents strapped up, an' all! You must be crazy!"

"Well," said the farmer, gently, as he rose and went to carry the milk-pails into the pantry, calling coaxingly, as he did so, "Kitty! kitty! You had your milk? Don't you joggle, now!" For one eager tabby rose on her hind legs, in purring haste, and hit her nose against the foaming saucer.

Mrs. Pike came ponderously to her feet, and followed,

with the heavy, swaying motion of one grown fleshy and rheumatic. She was not in the least concerned about Eli's change of mood. He was a gentle soul, and she had always been able to guide him in paths of her own choosing. Moreover, the present undertaking was one involving his own good fortune, and she meant to tolerate no foolish scruples which might interfere with its result. For Eli, though he had lived all his life within easy driving distance of the ocean, had never seen it, and ever since his boyhood he had cherished one darling plan, — some day he would go to the shore, and camp out there for a week. This, in his starved imagination, was like a dream of the Acropolis to an artist stricken blind, or as mountain outlines to the dweller in a lonely plain. But the years had flitted past, and the dream never seemed nearer completion. There were always planting, haying, and harvesting to be considered ; and though he was fairly prosperous, excursions were foreign to his simple habit of life. But at last, his wife had stepped into the van, and organized an expedition, with all the valor of a Francis Drake.

"Now, don't you say one word, father," she had said. "We're goin' down to the beach, Sereno, an' Hattie, an' you, an' me, an' we're goin' to camp out. It'll do us all good."

For days before the date of the excursion, Eli had been solemn and tremulous, as with joy ; but now, on the eve of the great event, he shrank back from it, with an undefined notion that it was like death, and that he was not prepared. Next morning, however, when they all rose and took their early breakfast, preparatory to starting at five, he showed no sign of indecision, and even went about his outdoor tasks with an alacrity calculated, as his wife approvingly remarked, to "for'ard the v'y'ge." He had at last begun to see

his way clear, and he looked well satisfied when his daughter Hattie and Sereno, her husband, drove into the yard, in a wagon cheerfully suggestive of a wandering life. The tents and a small hair-trunk were stored in the back, and the horse's pail swung below.

"Well, father," called Hattie, her rosy face like a flower under the large shade-hat she had trimmed for the occasion, "guess we're goin' to have a good day!"

He nodded from the window, where he was patiently holding his head high and undergoing strangulation, while his wife, breathing huskily with haste and importance, put on his stock.

"You come in, Hattie, an' help pack the doughnuts into that lard-pail on the table," she called. "I guess you 'll have to take two pails. They ain't very big."

At length, the two teams were ready, and Eli mounted to his place, where he looked very slender beside his towering mate. The hired man stood leaning on the pump, chewing a bit of straw, and the cats rubbed against his legs, with tails like banners; they were all impressed by a sense of the unusual.

"Well, good-bye, Luke," Mrs. Pike called, over her shoulder; and Eli gave the man a solemn nod, gathered up the reins, and drove out of the yard. Just outside the gate, he pulled up.

"Whoa!" he called, and Luke lounged forward. "Don't you forgit them cats! Git up, Doll!" And this time, they were gone.

For the first ten miles of the way, familiar in being the road to market, Eli was placidly cheerful. The sense that he was going to do some strange deed, to step into an unknown country, dropped away from him, and he chatted, in his intermittent, serious fashion, of the crops and the lay of the land.

"Pretty bad job up along here, ain't it, father?" called Sereno, as they passed a sterile pasture where

two plodding men and a yoke of oxen were redeeming the soil from its rocky fetters.

"There's a good deal o' pastur', in some places, that ain't fit for nothin' but to hold the world together," returned Eli.

And then he was silent, his eyes fixed on Doll's eloquent ears, his mouth working a little. For this progress through a less desirable stratum of life caused him to cast a backward glance over his own smooth, middle-aged road.

"We've prospered, ain't we, Maria?" he said, at last.

And his wife, unconsciously following his thoughts, in the manner of those who have lived long together, stroked her black silk *visite*, and answered, with a well-satisfied nod:—

"I guess we hain't got no cause to complain."

The roadside was parched under an August sun; tansy was dust-covered, and ferns had grown ragged and gray. The jogging horses left behind their lazy feet a-suffocating cloud.

"My land!" cried Mrs. Pike, "if that ain't goldenrod! I do b'lieve it comes earlier every year, or else the seasons are changin'. See them elderberries! Ain't they purple! You jest remember that bush, an' when we go back, we'll fill some pails. I dunno when I've made elderberry wine."

Like her husband, she was vaguely excited; she began to feel as if life would be all holidays. At noon, they stopped under the shadow of an elm tree which, from its foothold in a field, completely arched the road; and there they ate a lunch of pie and doughnuts, while the horses, freed from their headstalls, placidly munched a generous feed of oats, near by. Hattie and her mother accepted this picnicking with an air of apologetic amusement; and when one or

two passers-by looked at them, they smiled a little at vacancy, with the air of wishing it understood that they were by no means accustomed to such irregularities.

"I guess they think we 're gypsies," said Hattie, as one carriage rolled past.

"Well, they need n't trouble themselves," returned her mother, rising with difficulty to brush the crumbs from her capacious lap. "I guess I've got as good an extension-table to home as any on 'em."

But Eli ate sparingly, and with a preoccupied and solemn look.

"Land, father!" exclaimed his wife, "you hain't eat no more 'n a bird!"

"I guess I'll go over to that well," said he, "an' git a drink o' water. I drink more 'n I eat, if I ain't workin'."

But when he came back, carefully bearing a tin pail brimming with cool, clear water, his face expressed strong disapprobation, and he smacked his lips scornfully.

"Terrible flat water!" he announced. "Tastes as if it come out o' the cistern."

But the others could find no fault with it, and Sereno drained the pail.

"Pretty good, I call it," he said.

And Mrs. Pike rejoined, —

"You always was pretty particular about water, father."

But Eli still shook his head, and ejaculated, "Brackish, brackish!" as he began to put the bit in Doll's patient mouth. He was thinking, with a passion of loyalty, of the clear, ice-cold water at home, which had never been shut out, by a pump, from the purifying airs of heaven, but lay where the splashing bucket and chain broke, every day, the image of moss and fern. *His throat grew parched and dry with longing.*

When they were within three miles of the sea, it seemed to them that they could taste the saltness of the incoming breeze ; the road was ankle-deep in dust ; the garden flowers were glaring in their brightness. It was a new world. And when at last they emerged from the marsh-bordered road upon a ridge of sand and turned a sudden corner, Mrs. Pike faced her husband in triumph.

"There, father !" she cried. "There 't is !"

But Eli's eyes were fixed on the dashboard in front of him. He looked pale.

"Why, father," said she, impatiently, "ain't you goin' to look ? It 's the sea !"

"Yes, yes," said Eli, quietly ; "byme-by. I 'm goin' to put the horses up fust."

"Well, I never !" said Mrs. Pike. And as they drew up on the sandy tract where Sereno had previously arranged a place for their tents, she added, almost fretfully, turning to Hattie, "I dunno what 's come over your father. There 's the water, an' he won't even cast his eyes at it."

But Hattie understood her father, by some intuition of love, though not of likeness.

"Don't you bother him, ma," she said. "He 'll make up his mind to it pretty soon. Here, le's lift out these little things, while they 're unharnessin', and then they can get at the tents."

Mrs. Pike's mind was diverted by the exigencies of labor, and she said no more. But after the horses had been put up at a neighboring house, and Sereno, red faced with exertion, had superintended the tent-raising, Hattie slipped her arm through her father's, and led him away.

"Come, pa," she said, in a whisper ; "le's you and me climb over on them rocks."

Eli went ; and when they had picked their way

over sand and pools to a headland where the water thundered below, and salt spray dashed up in mist to their feet, he turned and looked at the sea. He faced it as a soul might face Almighty Greatness, only to be stricken blind thereafter; for his eyes filled painfully with slow, hot tears.

Hattie did not look at him, but after a while she shouted in his ear, above the outcry of the surf, —

"Here, pa, take my handkerchief. I don't know how 't is about you, but this spray gets in my eyes."

Eli took it obediently, but he did not speak; he only looked at the sea.

The two sat there, chilled and quite content, until six o'clock, when Mrs. Pike came calling to them from the beach, with dramatic shouts, emphasized by the waving of her ample apron, —

"Supper's ready! Sereno's built a burn-fire, an' I've made some tea!"

Then they slowly made their way back to the tents, and sat down to the evening meal. Sereno seemed content, and Mrs. Pike was bustling and triumphant; the familiar act of preparing food had given her the feeling of home.

"Well, father, what think?" she asked, smiling exuberantly, as she passed him his mug of tea. "Does it come up to what you expected?"

Eli turned upon her his mild, dazed eyes.

"I guess it does," he said, gently.

That night, they sat upon the shore while the moon rose and laid in the water her majestic pathway of light. Eli was the last to leave the rocks, and he lay down on his hard couch in the tent, without speaking.

"I would n't say much to father," whispered Hattie to her mother, as they parted for the night. "He feels it more 'n we do."

"*Well, I s'pose* he is some tired," said Mrs. Pike,

acquiescing, after a brief look of surprise. "It's a good deal of a jaunt, but I dunno but I feel paid a'ready. Should you take out your hairpins, Hattie?"

She slept soundly and vocally, but her husband did not close his eyes. He looked, though he could see nothing, through the opening in the tent, in the direction where lay the sea, solemnly clamorous, eternally responsive to some infinite whisper from without his world. The tension of the hour was almost more than he could bear; he longed for morning, in sharp suspense, with a faint hope that the light might bring relief. Just as the stars faded, and one luminous line penciled the east, he rose, smoothed his hair, and stepped softly out upon the beach. There he saw two shadowy figures, Sereno and Hattie. She hurried forward to meet him.

"You goin' to see the sunrise, too, father?" she asked. "I made Sereno come. He's awful mad at bein' waked up."

Eli grasped her arm.

"Hattie," he said, in a whisper, "don't you tell. I jest come out to see how 't was here, before I go. I'm goin' home, — I'm goin' *now*!"

"Why, father!" said Hattie. But she peered more closely into his face, and her tone changed. "All right," she added, cheerfully. "Sereno 'll go and harness up."

"No; I'm goin' to walk."

"But, father —"

"I don't mean to break up your stayin' here, nor your mother's. You tell her how 't was. I'm goin' to walk."

Hattie turned and whispered to her husband for a moment. Then she took her father's hand.

"I'll slip into the tent and put you up somethin' for your breakfast and luncheon," she said. "Sereno's

gone to harness ; for, pa, you must take one horse, and you can send Luke back with it Friday, so 's we can get the things home. What do we want of two horses down here, at two and ninepence a day? I guess I know ! ”

So Eli yielded ; but before his wife appeared, he had turned his back on the sea, where the rose of dawn was fast unfolding. As he jogged homeward, the dusty roadsides bloomed with flowers of paradise, and the insects' dry chirp thrilled like the song of angels. He drove into the yard just at the turning of the day, when the fragrant smoke of many a crackling fire curls cheerily upward, in promise of the evening meal.

“ What 's busted ? ” asked Luke, swinging himself down from his load of fodder-corn, and beginning to unharness Doll.

“ Oh, nothin' ,” said Eli, leaping from the wagon as if twenty years had been taken from his bones. “ I guess I'm too old for such jaunts. I hope you did n't forgit them cats.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

What had been the effect of lifelong routine upon Eli's habits? What shows the intensity of his feeling as he looked forward to the vacation? Contrast his gloomy mood with Mrs. Pike's happy spirit as they were on their way. Why should such a feeling of loneliness, fear, and awe have come over him as he sat upon the shore that evening? How do you account for his stubborn refusal to open his heart to what was new and strange? Although this experience was tragic to him, what do you find in it odd and humorous?

Technique

Introduction. The introduction should generally be *short* and take the reader into the *theme* of the story at once.

Is this a good introduction from that point of view? What advantage is there in having *conversation*, even a line or two, begin the story? How do Eli's doubts and fears *arouse interest*? How quickly is the *central theme* indicated?

Plot. The action is so simple that it can hardly be called a plot. It is a *single situation*, in which is detailed the effect of a strange experience upon deeply rooted habits of life. How does every word and act of Eli's, from first to last, lead your imagination alone toward a somewhat definite *climax*? The *conclusion* of the action is very effective. How might a less skillful writer have ended the story?

Character. *Sketching* of personal traits and moods of feeling, not character *development*, is important. Are the sketches of these people lifelike? Why are details of action, personal appearance, and character worked out carefully? Which is most effective in giving *individuality*, description or conversation? How does each aid the other? The conveying of emotion is often best done by *suggestion*. Note how effective this method is with reference to Eli's feeling on the way home, and at his arrival. Find other illustrations of this use of suggestion.

THE CHIEF OPERATOR

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

EXCEPT for the noise of the storm the exchange was noticeably quiet. For an hour calls had been few; when they came they tangled and overlapped as if from some general cause affecting particular cases. Men were occupied with facing the weather, or hurrying home from it. Many mothers had gone out with umbrellas and little coats to bring children back from school. There was a lull in the demands upon the wire, which for a small country exchange was rather a busy one. Now and then a drop fell, or a young voice called, "Number?" and between whiles the girls chatted disjointedly as girls do when they have half a chance; or looked dismally out upon the rain from the drowning windows. There were two girls, known as Molly and Mary, and the chief operator, held in respect by them not only for a certain power to enforce official authority, but because she was a married woman; and Molly and Mary were at the age when this circumstance appeared of more importance than it ever does before or after. The effect was depleted a little by the fact that Mrs. Raven was a widow; but she was quite a young widow, and still attractive—who could have said why? Of beauty she had little or none; but the eye remained upon and returned to her. The girls thought it was an "air" she had, the fit of a shirt-waist, the hang of a skirt, the way of braiding her bright hair below the head-receiver. An older or *finer* observer would have said, "It is her expression."

This was self-possessed, but gentle ; the old-fashioned word "modest" might have said it better than any of the newer feminine adjectives. There was a firm curve to her full, irregular lip which every operator knew and regarded, but her clear eyes, wide and warm, found it more natural to plead than to command. Her features, her gestures, her voice, appealed. She was without self-assertion. This, one would soon have determined, was not from deficiency in force, but from the acquisition of a quality which is the essence of force, although it may seem at first to be antagonistic to it. In some way, in some form, life had taught her to disregard herself. Even the girls perceived that their young chief was not uppermost in her own thoughts. They supposed it was because she was a widow.

It had rained continuously for three days and nights, and the river was swollen and perturbed. It was not a very broad river in its normal condition, but a deep one, and swung upon a powerful current. Now it had risen, and looked unnaturally large ; the banks, at that point, were low, and the exchange stood within a hundred feet of the water. This gave a cool, agreeable outlook, which the chief operator liked in summer, and at which she glanced gratefully whenever she could. It was August — the scorching August of 1908. She sat at her desk apart from her staff of two, beside the large, low window. The exchange stood by itself — a wooden building well put together ; there was a small grocery-store upon the first floor ; the telephone occupied the second story ; the grocer was an old man, and sometimes walked a part of the way to protect Mrs. Raven when she went home to her stepmother's house, two miles down the desolate river-side, at half past nine at night ; after that no woman

remained in the exchange, and the night operator came on duty.

The town had the wide spaces and uncertain comforts of the territory. The telephone was cherished accordingly. It was still treated like a miracle.

Sarah Raven sat at her desk and looked thoughtfully into the storm. It was towards the end of the month, and the great drought had broken, only to be renewed in a fiercer form after passing relief. Meanwhile the dark weather had something of the effect which the interruption of drought always has; finding one less grateful than one should be because one has become so accustomed to sunshine that its absence influences the spirits to the defiance of the season. Mrs. Raven was tired with the season's work, and somewhat pale. She was a compact little figure of a woman; her black skirt and white waist with the black tie at her throat looked like a uniform or a habit upon her. She sat a trifle averted from the girls, the profile of her face and delicate bust against the long window set in a mist of rain and river. The head-receiver gave a Greek look to the American working-woman.

More than the sadness of storm was on her that afternoon, and as the day declined this increased. She attended listlessly to her duties when the girls called: "Number? What number?" and her eyes returned to the bloated river. What mattered a creeping tear if the river alone could see? This was August the 28th. To-morrow would be one of the anniversaries of which people who know life say that they are "days to be got over." To-morrow would be — From the pang of it she tried to forget, and then for the love of it she determined to remember, and then she *dashed forgetting and remembering from her, and whirled upon her revolving-chair.*

There was a sudden acceleration of demands upon the exchange. Calls came in from everywhere — most of them were impatient, and many irritable. Wives were summoning husbands, and husbands reassuring wives. "The storm is so bad — do get home! The house shakes, and the river frightens me. Hurry home, Harry; do!" — "Don't be anxious, Sue, if I am late to-night. It's pretty bad, and hard going. I'll get there sometime." Messages rained as hard as the storm. The drops upon the switchboard clattered fast.

"What number?" asked Molly.

"Chief operator?" called Mary.

"Chief operator," said Mrs. Raven, instantly.

The wind had mounted in the last half-hour and buffeted the exchange, which shook in the grip of it. The river ran angrily, and took on a frown as the early twilight of the storm descended. Between the three sounds — the threat of the water, the onset of the wind, and the complaining of the rain — it was hard to hear the slender cry of the wire. The girls had ceased to chatter, and listened sedulously.

The electric bulbs, staring with their indifferent eyes behind their softening shades, brightened as the room darkened; for an unnatural dusk had set in upon the place. The switchboard itself wore a curious look, almost an expression, like that of a face — a consciousness; it had the air of power before which the girlish figures playing upon it were trivial and inefficient — the puppets of a mystery which might turn naster when it appeared to be most slave. Somehow the rage of the river and the storm added to this impression; as if the elemental forces — water, wind and electricity — had combined into insurrection against human control.

If Mrs. Raven felt this, she had not time to think it; she had no time to think at all before there came

quivering down the wire from her chief at headquarters, some fifteen miles upstream, an order before which she stiffened into military attention. Now her voice rose like a thing that was trying to fly, and grew a trifle shrill; then it fell into the low, sustained telephone tones.

"What did you say? Please repeat. It is very noisy here. The storm — Please repeat, I say — More distinctly —

"— *What?* I don't get it all. Something ails your transmitter. — I can't make it all out — only a few words. — *What?*"

She had begun to tremble now; her bright head, with its Greek headpiece like a fillet, shook, and her hands. The operators at the switchboard had snatched at the sense of the message, and she could hear them crying out between disjointed fragments. Now the disability in the current — or perhaps it was the interference of the storm — had for the moment succumbed, and the call from headquarters, peremptory and clear as cut glass, came to her ears with the insistence of irrevocable catastrophe.

"The dam is going down. The river is breaking loose. Run for your lives! You have no time to spare. Notify anybody you can, but fly for your life! Do you hear me? Good-bye."

"I hear you perfectly," said Sarah Raven. "I thank you for notifying me. Good-bye."

Her chair whirled, but she did not leave it.

"Girls —" she began. But the girls had already plucked the danger from the wire and had melted from the switchboard madly; they were flitting and screaming like the flock of birds swaying outside the window — little beings seeking shelter from fate, and *fussily* complaining of it.

"*You can go, Molly and Mary,*" said the chief

operator, quietly. She put out her hand for her official directory.

"Mrs. Raven! Mrs. Raven!" cried Molly. "Why don't you come, too?"

"Mrs. Raven!" called Mary. "*Dear Mrs. Raven! Hurry! — Mrs. Raven, ain't you coming with us?*"

"No, I am not coming — not yet. Don't talk to me, girls. I have my subscribers to think of first. Good-bye, girls."

The girls dashed at her and kissed her and pleaded with her; but she repeated obstinately, "Good-bye, girls." And so they turned, sobbing childishly, thinking of themselves, as girls do, and started for the stairs. At the top of the long flight Mary looked back and cried out once more: —

"*Dear Mrs. Raven! — Don't you want me to stay, too?*"

But Sarah Raven did not answer. It was doubtful if she heard. Her record of listed subscribers wavered in her hand, but her voice did not shake at all. As Mary went down the stairs she heard it echoing through the empty exchange.

"Is this 122 — ring 2?"

The young chief was calling her subscribers. She was about to warn them. Mary knew that Mrs. Raven meant to warn them all — all who were in danger and had not been notified. There were forty of them in the lower valley. At the foot of the stairs, tumbling out pellmell, the girls heard one authoritative order — their last — from the exchange above: —

"Tell the grocer. Tell Mr. Rice. He's old. He needs plenty of time."

Sarah Raven left her desk and went to the deserted switchboard. She had removed her head-receiver to *do so, and put on one belonging to the girls. She sat*

at her post with a composure which affected every muscle; if it did not reach the nerve, one watching her would not have known it. But there was no one to watch. She heard the hysterical flurry of the girls cease upon the stairs, but scarcely with attention to the circumstance. She was too much alone to think about it. She was not thinking of herself at all — not yet. She felt in some subterranean corridor of her being that the moment would come when she should; but dismissed the idea as an interruption to her duty. To this she set herself with a passion that obliterated everything else gloriously; as passion does when it is high enough.

If anything that she did in that whirlwind of mind and heart could be called deliberate, she had deliberately chosen to call 122, ring 2, the first of all. It seemed to her that she had the right to so much — and the house was very near the water.

“For father’s sake,” she thought. “She was father’s wife. And she’s been a good stepmother to me.”

Flashing, and fading as soon as they had flashed, she saw the comfortable, commonplace things that signified home to her — an orderly sitting-room with a hot Rochester burner on the centre-table; a red silk shade; a light-wood blaze sparkling on the hearth for her when she should drag herself in, drenched and tired; the table set for supper with willow-ware in the dining-room beyond; a portly, kindly figure trundling in a blue cotton dress and white apron across the room to say: “Land! You must be frazzled out.” As the door swung back she could see her husband’s crayon portrait above the mantelpiece.

Her voice pierced the turmoil of water and wind with an astonishing self-possession: —

“Mother! Run for your life! The dam is broken. *Don’t wait for anything — run! — No, I can’t come*

yet — No, it does n't matter about me — not till I've warned my subscribers — Oh, I *must* take time to say — you've been a good mother to me — No, no, no, I *can't* do it. Good-bye."

She was surprised to find, when she had rung off her stepmother's agitated cries and entreaties, that she did not know for a wild moment what to do next; which of all the human homes dependent upon her to warn first. She perceived that they depended no more upon her heroism than upon her good sense, and yet that seemed to be the very quality which was deserting her. She sat drenched in the cold sweat of indecision, and for a few minutes she rang up her subscribers mechanically, by order of their number: 123 — 123, ring 1 — 124 — 125.

But she quickly collected herself and began to select from the unconscious families upon which the doom of the river was bearing down. With the swiftness of a sympathetic operator in a country exchange where she knew everybody and everybody knew her, she recalled the circumstances of her subscribers — who was sick, who was incompetent, who was hysterical, who had no man in the house.

She had rung up the daughter of a bedridden mother; they two lived alone at the bend of the stream where the flood must double upon itself and leave but half a chance, if any, even now; she was calling: —

"128? Fanny! The river is rising. Run for the neighbors to lift her. You have n't a minute. Run!"

She was still crying: "Fanny! Get the neighbors to lift her!" when the old grocer stumbled up the stairs and stood wheezing behind her. He had grasped her by the arm and shoulder.

"You get out o' here!" he screamed.

She shook her head without a glance.

"I won't have it. I tell you I won't stand by and

see it!" shouted the grocer. "You come along o' me. There's time ef you're spry. Lord! Feel this building rock! You drop them there wires and get out o' here, I say! — *Won't*, hey? Well, Sarah Raven, I'll jest set here till you will."

The grocer sat down and looked at her obstinately; he was shriveled with terror. The flood had yet a considerable distance to come; the dam was six or seven miles above the telephone headquarters in the country town; but the writhing valley helped the advance of the torrent, and it was impossible either then or after to time that terrible race.

The old grocer stamped up and down the room; he had begun to gibber.

"Mr. Rice," said the operator, "this room is the property of the Southwestern Telephone Company, and I am their officer. I order you to leave the place. Oh, go!" she broke into a womanish cry, "there may be somebody — something —"

At this he went, as she had thought he would; she did not turn her head to see; she felt that she was alone with her duty. She glanced out of the long window. She saw foam and heard thunder. The stream, frenzied by rain, had already acquired a terrible breadth. It was not yet quite dark.

"It looks like the River of Death," she thought. She did not look at it again. Her eyes, burned dry, smarted as if they had been fastened to her task with hot wax. The electric jets beneath their green shades winked and dimmed about her. The building quivered through every oaken sinew. A man might have been pardoned had he shaken with sheer physical terror. A soldier might have fled and been forgiven. The young woman sat at her post like a figure carved from the switchboard, a creature born of the thrill and *power of modern life*, whose opportunities replace the

old brutal heroisms by as much as its ingenuities are finer. She rang to her task as truly as the call-bells, and clung to it as simply as the plugs and levers. She could easily have escaped from the building; there was still plenty of time; but it did not occur to her to do so.

Her mind worked swiftly now, and very clearly. Yet down the list of her subscribers her feeling ran ahead of her thought. Her instinct to save was quicker than electricity. It leaped before the current could, and melted with pity into forty homes. She set her white teeth and glanced over her shoulder at the advancing terror.

"You — *you!*" she defied it. "I'll warn them all in spite of you."

Then she grew abject, and humbly entreated the river: —

"Just give me time, won't you? I need more time."

There was a little boy down with scarlet fever at 116, ring 3. The house stood too near the banks. Oh, they all did, for that matter. It would be hard to get the little fellow out — and in the storm! There seemed to be as much water falling from above as there was rising from below. Her name? What *was* her name? Was the operator's reason going with all the rest?

". . . Mrs. Penney! Run for your life — and Johnny's! The dam is broken. Wrap Johnny up in something — your waterproof. Leave everything else — only Johnny. Somebody will take him in. Oh, I am sure they will. You have n't a minute. Good-bye."

". . . Miss Gregory? Is that Maria Gregory? There's a flood coming. Keep your head, Maria — you're the only person in the house that has one — and get your mother and sister out. Good-bye."

". . . Mr. Cole? That you, Mr. Cole? The dam is

broken. Run for your lives! The nurse will help lift her — and the new baby — You have time if you're quick. Good-bye."

"... Mrs. Bassett? There's a flood coming down the valley. Count your children and run for their lives — Don't stop to ask a question. Do as I tell you. Run! Good-bye."

"... Mary Brown! Mary Brown! The river is rising. Don't stop for anything. Get out of the house with your father. Is he sober to-night? Can he walk? — Then *roll* him out. You'll drown if you don't. — Good-bye."

"... Mr. Henshaw? Mr. Henshaw, that you? There's a flood coming. Run and intercept Jenny on her way from the office. Don't go back home. Run!"

"... Helen Patterson? Helen Patterson! Is n't this 126, ring 3? Mrs. Patterson? — 126 — ring 3? Helen Patterson?"

The call-bell at 126, ring 3, remained unanswered. The operator's fingers flew along her plugs: 126, ring 4? But 126, ring 4, was silent, too.

"112? Is this 112? Are n't you there, 112? Why don't you answer me? I am Mrs. Raven. The dam is broken. Can't you speak? 112? Can't you *hear*?"

She rebuffed the truth from her as long as she could. She played upon the board bravely. She piled number upon number, selecting here and there, testing every wire on her map. She kept her head and her courage till this was done. Then for a moment her hands fell upon her lap, and her chin upon her breast.

But she collected herself quickly, and recalled with a dash of shame at her passing confusion that the upstream wires still hung between herself and her headquarters. She rang up her manager, nervously now, without waiting for him to answer.

"*I have to report that my lower wires are down.*

They are *all* down. I can't notify my subscribers — any more. — I have done the best I could, sir. — I can't do anything — more."

She thought he tried to say — "Escape!" But if he replied at all, and she was not sure that he did, the word was cut off as if it had been slashed with a knife. At the same instant, suddenly and utterly the lights went out.

The operator's voice trailed away into beaten silence, and she stared about her into the oscillating darkness. The wires to headquarters were disabled, too. Nothing would be done about it; nothing could be; the trouble-men could not work in the flood; probably the poles were going or gone. The last strand that connected her with the living world had snapped. The electric fire, so long her servant, had betrayed her. Up to now she had comforted herself by the sense of contact with humankind, with the living voices in the human homes for the sake of which she had ceased to think of herself or her young life. So profound and so absorbing was her sense of solitude that at first it half displaced from her consciousness what it signified to her. The ruin of the wires gave her the right to think of herself — to save herself, after all.

She sprang, but the head-receiver — the signal of her official duty — held her. She removed it and went to the window. The floor, as she crossed it, swayed like a reeling bridge. She glanced at the river. It was an ocean of blackness, flogged by foam. She ran to the head of the stairs, but stopped to look out of the front window. She could swim — all the river girls could — and it suggested itself to her that, if the water were only quiet enough, she might yet make her way to land.

One look sufficed her. There was no longer any river; it had become a raving sea. The exchange

stood, an island in a whirlpool. Perhaps it would continue to stand — it was a sturdy building. That was a reasonable chance, she thought, and she clung to it sensibly.

She felt her way to her seat at her switchboard, and from long habit, perhaps, put on her head-receiver, or it might have been that she still cherished a hope that the trouble-men would be able to do something and repair the trunk-wire. It was impossible for her to judge of this, and at all events she chose to keep to her post.

In the dark she began to grope for her plugs and drops, feeling for the numbers that she knew almost as well by sense of touch as by sense of sight. There might still be a chance to warn some helpless family — some foolish, incompetent woman, or disabled person. She reviewed her list of subscribers, name by name, asking whom she had omitted. It comforted her to believe that all the sick people had been told in time. She sat before her switchboard and thought of this. She had not found time yet to think of herself.

Every one who has listened much to electric systems knows how impressive is their capacity for rhythmical sound. Wild weather strikes strange concords or discords from the local labyrinth. He could not have known the burden of his words who told us of "the music of the spheres" centuries before electricity was named or tamed.

The operator with her metal fillet on her head hears nothing of this inchoate harmony; only the obedient hum or the rebellious roar of her working-line. But as she walks home on bitter nights beneath the frosted wires, or lies hearing their thrilling cry upon the roof above her tired head, she listens with the acute *sentence of her calling*. She cannot deafen to the over-

mastering voices as another might. Her auditory nerves are never at rest. Sleep scarcely assuages them. She longs for silence which she may not find. If she be at all a sensitive woman, or especially if she be a music-loving one, she fancies curious harmonies or dissonances even in the monotonous and maddening buzz of the wire whose bond-slave she is. The world to her is never still; it is an autocracy of electric sound.

Sarah Raven had been, in a simple, country fashion, a musical girl, and she had been used to imagine sometimes that the current and the weather, united or apart, played accompaniments or struck melodies to the hymns and sacred songs by which the musical education of the village was chiefly bounded: little tinkling things that she had heard in churches and at weekly meetings — *Shall we gather at the river?* was one of them. There was another that she used to like: —

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green.”

Now the wires were rent and snarled and flung — dashed and drowned in air and water. Yet — how was this? — the great choral seemed to her to sweep along outside the rocking building, as sounds that have actually ceased continue to repeat themselves to overstrained ears. As she sat at her post awaiting her fate — this was now a matter of moments, but her thoughts and sensations seemed to cover a long time — as she sat there, patient and grand, she remembered that she had meant to pray for herself as she had been taught in her religiously trained childhood. There had not been any time to think of that. Who, with forty human homes to warn, could stop for such a thing?

Plainly, it had been impossible. She wondered if

God would blame her because she had forgotten her own soul.

Now, stealing upon the brutal uproar in whose central cell she was imprisoned, there came to her consciousness the strains of one of the great hymns by the power of which men have lived and died for more than a hundred and fifty years of human struggle.

Upon the wings of many waters she could hear this borne past the tottering building. It seemed to her as if it had stopped to take her up and sweep her on with it; as a phalanx of soldiers with their bugles and drums might gather up some defenseless creature in a riot, and so protect him.

"Jesus, Lover of my soul! . . .

"While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high. . . .

"Jesus, Lover of my soul! . . .
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

The morning wore a wicked glitter. It showed a blazing, almost a blasting, sun, and there was no wind. But for the river it would have been a very quiet, cheerful day; one of the mornings when people hurry out of doors, laughing, and make up little picnics, and play with children, and smile at neighbors passing, and wish them good-day with cheery hearts.

But no one smiled that day throughout the valley. Tragic searching-parties followed the river's new and fatal banks. Boats went down as soon as the torrent would hold them, and, swirling on snapping oars, hunted for signs of death or life. All the stalwart citizens offered themselves, and every man who could row or swim volunteered to leave no snag untouched, no eddy unexamined. A few persons floating on trees or

roofs had been saved at dawn. More whom it was too late to save had been silently lifted and covered from sight. The old grocer ran to and fro calling shrilly.

"Where is Sarah Raven? Can't *anybody* find Mrs. Raven? Mebbe she 's a livin' woman somewheres yet."

"He tried to put out in a boat for her last night," a compassionate neighbor said, "but he was oversot, and it's kinder crazed him."

Mary and Molly had followed the grocer, and stood childishly wringing their hands. For once in their little lives they did not talk. They felt ashamed to.

Midway of the morning there appeared a few men on horseback from the county town. These were the officials of the Southwestern Telephone Company — the manager, the superintendent of construction, and one or two subordinates. Their rigid faces wore the look of overwrought and sleepless men who are divided between grief and action. They were silent as men are in such a case, but they worked with the more formidable determination for that.

Six miles — eight miles — ten miles down the stream, a horse and a foot, and by spinning boats, the search went past the people. But the river vindictively refused to them their heroine.

It was hot, still noon when a man, wading waist-deep beneath a flooded orchard, called loudly for help, and twenty ran and dashed into the water at his side.

Twelve miles below her own exchange the young operator lay among the trees; so quietly, one might have said, from the smile of her so happily, that it seemed half a pity to intrude upon her dream. Whatever it was, it had the sense of security that our dreams never know; and it would have been difficult to suppose, as one regarded her mercifully unmarred face, that she had ever suffered.

A mud-bespattered wagon with a limping horse that

had followed the search since daylight stopped opposite the mute, bareheaded group. A large woman climbed down — a woman in a drabbed blue cotton dress with a soaked white apron ; she plodded laboriously through the mud at the orchard's edge ; she was sobbing without restraint.

"Gentlemen," she said, "bein' men-folks, I don't know 's you 'll feel to care so much to know it, but if she'd been my own — I never knew she warn't — and, gentlemen, it is the 29th of August — and that's her wedding-day."

The manager of the Telephone Company, her chief from the upper town, rode splashing through the water and stood uncovered before Sarah Raven.

"She saved a good many," he said, speaking with difficulty. "She's got that comfort. It's more than most of us will ever get in this world. As nearly as we can tell there are fifty persons alive to-day that — if it had n't been for *her* —"

He could not finish what he was saying, but the old grocer, half crazed, fell upon his knees in the water.

"Lord," he cried, "forgive us our trespasses ! Question is whether we're *wuth* it, Lord !"

Now it was seen that the manager had asked leave to help carry her through the flooded trees. He looked down upon her proudly as he waded at her side.

"For the honor of the company," he thought.

But her stepmother babbled as she sobbed : —

"She'd oughter been buried in her wedding-dress. But it's gone — with everything else. She ain't even a home to her dear body to be laid out in."

"Every home left standing is hers to-day, madam," the chief answered, with emotion. "But that is the company's privilege. She is not yours any longer, *madam* ; she is ours. No, she is not ours — she is the *world's*."

He stooped and touched her with a solemn reverence. The head-receiver, with its Greek look, was still fastened upon her bright hair. When some one would have removed it, the chief refused.

"We will not disturb that crown," he said.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

What qualities of heart and mind make you feel that Sarah Raven is greater than the narrow sphere of her day's work? How does her quiet force exert itself? What hints do you get of a life of thought and feeling not associated with her daily task at the switchboard? In what way do you think that her life of loss and sorrow may have prepared her for courageous self-sacrifice? What shows that her brave devotion to duty was a real struggle?

Technique

Introduction. With what slight details does the introduction give reality to the *scene*? This introduction is remarkable for the way in which the *central theme* is suggested. It is only an impression. Can you put this impression into words and show how it *arouses interest*?

Plot. The plot is simple and *develops* character through a single situation, working toward a definite *climax*. Where is *suspense* used to arouse interest? Where does *contrast* heighten effect? Why were further details of Sarah Raven's death left out? In a well-constructed story the action should end as soon as possible after the climax. Why are several pages necessary to bring the story to a *conclusion* after the death of the chief character?

Character. In presenting the chief character, where does the author use *direct description*? Where does she use *indirect description*? Which gives you the more vivid impression?

Background. The action of this story has what is called an artistic *setting*. Find descriptive passages that give you impressions of the charm, the power, and the mystery *surrounding this* common occupation.

IN AND OUT OF A CAB IN AMSTERDAM

By F. HOPKINSON SMITH

It is raining this morning in Amsterdam. It is a way it has in Holland. The old settlers do not seem to mind it, but I am only a few days from the land of the orange and the olive, and, although these wet, silvery grays and fresh greens are full of "quality," I long for the deep blue skies and clear-cut shadows of sunny Spain. On this particular morning I am in a cab and in search of a certain fish-market, and cabby is following the directions given him by a very round porter with a very flat cap and a deep bass voice.

There is nothing so comfortable as a cab to paint in if you only know how to utilize its resources. For me, long practice has brought it to a fine art. First, I have cabby take out the horse. This prevents his shaking me when he changes his tired leg. He is generally a spiral-spring-fed beast, and enjoys the relief. Then I take out the cushions. This keeps them dry. Then I close the back and off-side curtains, so as to concentrate the light, prop my easel up against the front seat, spread my palette and brushes on the bare wooden one, hang my rubber water-bottle up to the arm rest, and begin work. (I have even discovered in the bottom of certain cabs such luxuries as knot or auger holes through which to pour my waste water.) I then pass the umbrella-staff to cabby, calling particular attention to the iron spike, and *explain how useful it may become in removing the inquisitive small boy from the hind wheel.* One lesson

and two boys make a cabby an expert. This is why I am in a cab and am driving down the Keizersgracht on this very wet morning in Amsterdam.

Before the fat porter's directions could be fully carried out, however, I caught sight of an old bridge spanning a canal which pleased me greatly, and before my friend on the box could realize the consequences I had his horse out and tied to a wharf-post, and the interior of his cab transformed into a studio.

In five minutes I discovered that a cabless horse and a horseless cab presided over by a cabby armed with an umbrella-staff was not an everyday sight in Amsterdam. I had camped on the stone quay some distance from the street and out of everybody's way. I congratulated myself on my location, and felt sure I would not be disturbed. On my left was the canal crowded with market-boats laden with garden-truck; on my right, the narrow street choked with the traffic of the city.

Suddenly the business of Amsterdam ceased. Everybody on the large boats scrambled into smaller ones and sculled for shore. Everybody in the street simultaneously jumped from cart, wagon, and doorstep, and in twenty seconds I was overwhelmed by a surging throng, who swarmed about my four-wheeler and blocked up my only window with anxious, inquiring faces.

I had been in a crowd like this before, and knew exactly what to do. Sphinx-like silence and immobility of face are imperative. If you neither speak nor smile, the mob imbibes a kind of respect for you amounting almost to awe. Those nearest you, who can see a little and want to see more, unconsciously become your champions, and expostulate with those who cannot see anything, cautioning them against shaking the painter and obstructing his view.

This crowd was no exception to the general rule. I noticed, however, one peculiarity. As each Amsterdammer reached my window he would gaze silently at my canvas and then say, "Ah, teekenmeester." Soon the word went around and reached the belated citizens rushing up, who stopped and appeared satisfied, as they all exclaimed, "Ah, teekenmeester."

At last commerce resumed her sway. The street disentangled itself. The market in cabbages again became active, and I was left comparatively alone, always excepting the small boy. The variety here was singularly irritating. They mounted the roof, blocked up the windows, clambered up on the front seat, until cabby became sufficiently conversant with the use of the business end of my umbrella-staff, after which they kept themselves at a respectful distance.

Finally a calm settled down over everything. The rain fell gently and continuously. The spiral-spring beast rested himself on alternate legs, and the boys contemplated me from a distance. Cabby leaned in the off-window and became useful as a cup-holder, and I was rapidly finishing my first sketch in Holland when the light was shut out, and looking up I saw the head of an officer of police. He surveyed me keenly, — my sketch and my interior arrangements, — and then in a gruff voice gave me an order in low Dutch. I pointed to my staff-holder, and continued painting. In a moment the officer thrust his head through the off-window and repeated his order in high Dutch. I waved him away firmly, and again referred him to cabby.

Then a war began on the outside in which everybody took a hand, and in half a minute more the population of Amsterdam had blocked up the wharf. I preserved my Egyptian exterior, and proceeded unconcernedly to lay a fresh wash over my sky. While

thus occupied, I became conscious that the spiral-spring was being united once more to the cab. This fact became positive when cabby delivered up the umbrella-staff and opened the door.

I got out.

The gentleman in gilt buttons was at a white heat. The mass meeting were indulging in a running fire of criticism, punctuated by loose cabbage-leaves and rejected vegetables, which sailed, bomb-like, through the air, and the upshot of the whole matter was that the officer ordered me away from the quay and into a side street.

But why? The streets of Amsterdam were free. I was out of everybody's way, was breaking no law, and creating no disturbance.

At this instant half of a yesterday's cabbage came sailing through the atmosphere from a spot in the direction of a group of wharf-rats, struck the officer's helmet, and rolled it into the canal. A yell went up from the crowd, cabby went down to the water for the headgear, and the owner drew his short sword and charged on the wharf-rats, who suddenly disappeared.

I reëntered my studio, shut the door, and continued work. I concluded that it was not my funeral.

I remember distinctly the situation at this moment. I had my water-bottle in my hand refilling the cups, mouth full of brushes, palette on my lap, and easel steadied by one foot. Suddenly a face surmounted by a wet helmet, and livid with rage, was thrust into mine, and a three-cornered variety of dialect that would produce a sore throat in any one except a Dutchman was hurled at me, accompanied by the usual well-known "move on" gesture.

Remembering the soothing influence exerted on the former mob, I touched my hat to his excellency, and said, "Teekenmeester." The head disappeared like a

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shot, and in an instant I was flat on my back in the bottom of the cab, bespattered with water, smeared with paint, and half smothered under a débris of cushions, water-cups, wet-paper, and loose sketches, and in that position was unceremoniously jolted over the stones.

The majesty of the law had asserted itself! I was backed up in a side street!

I broke open the door and crawled out in the rain. His excellency was standing at the head of the spiral-spring, with a sardonic grin on his countenance.

The mob greeted my appearance with a shout of derision. I mounted the driver's seat and harangued them. I asked, in a voice that might have been heard in Rotterdam, if anybody about me understood English. A shabbily-dressed, threadbare young fellow elbowed his way towards me and said he did. I helped him up beside me on the box and addressed the multitude, my seedy friend interpreting. I reviewed the history of old Amsterdam and its traditions; its reputation for hospitality; its powerful colonies scattered over the world; its love for art and artists. Then I passed to the greatest of all its possessions, — the New Amsterdam of the New World, my own city, — and asked them as Amsterdammers, or the reverse, whether they considered I had been fairly treated in the city of my great-grandfathers — I, a painter and a New Yorker!

I had come three thousand miles to carry home to their children in the New World some sketches of the grand old city they loved so well, and in return I had been insulted, abused, bumped over the stones, and made a laughing-stock.

I would appeal to them as brothers to decide whether *these streets of Amsterdam* were not always open to

her descendants, and whether I was not entitled to use them at all times by virtue of my very birthright. (Another shout went up, but this time a friendly one.) This being the case, I proposed to reoccupy my position and finish my sketch. If I had violated any law, it was the duty of the officer to put me under arrest. If not, then I was free to do as I pleased ; and if the highly honorable group of influential citizens about me would open their ranks, I would drive the cab back myself to the spot from which I had been so cruelly torn.

Another prolonged shout followed the interpretation, an opening was quickly made, and I had begun to chafe the spiral-spring with my shabby friend's umbrella, when cabby rushed forward, pale and trembling, seized the bridle, and begged me piteously to desist. My friend then explained that cabby would probably lose his license if I persisted, although I might carry my point and his cab back to the quay.

This argument being unanswerable, a council of war was held, to which a number of citizens who were leaning over the front wheels were invited, and it was decided to drive at once to the nearest police station and submit the whole outrage to the chief.

In two minutes we halted under the traditional green-glass lamp so familiar to all frequenters of such places. We saluted the sergeant, and were shown up a winding iron staircase into a small room and up to a long green table, behind which sat a bald-headed old fellow in undress uniform, smoking a short pipe.

My threadbare friend explained the cause of our visit. The old fellow looked surprised, and touched a bell which brought in another smoker in full dress, whose right ear served as a rack for a quill pen, and who used it (the pen not the ear) to take down our *statement*. Then the chief turned to me and asked

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my name. I gave it. This he repeated to the secretary. Occupation? Painter. "Teekenmeester," said he to the secretary.

Magic word! I have you at last. Teekenmeester is Dutch for painter.

The chief read the secretary's notes, signed them, and said I should call again in ten days, and he would submit a report.

"Report! What do I want with a report, your imperial highness? It is now four o'clock, and I have but two hours of daylight to finish this sketch. I don't want a report. I want an order compelling the pirate who presides over the cabbage-market district to respect the rights of a descendant of Amsterdam who is peacefully pursuing his avocation." Certainly, he so intended. I was at liberty to replace my cab and finish my sketch. The officer exceeded his instructions.

But how? I did not want either to provoke a riot or get my cabby into trouble. Ah, he understood. Another bell brought an orderly, who conducted us downstairs, opened a side door, called two officers, placed one outside with cabby and the other inside with me and Threadbare, and we drove straight back to the quay and were welcomed by a shout from my constituents compared to which all former cheering was a dead silence. I looked around for his excellency, but he was nowhere to be seen.

Verily, the majesty of the law had asserted itself!

I do not think I made much of an impression as a painter in Amsterdam, but I have always had an idea that I could be elected alderman in the cabbage-market district.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

This story is a little comedy, so vividly presented that you feel as though you were watching the action. One of its chief charms is the good humor of the author. In spite of his annoyance, you feel that he really enjoyed the whole affair. What pleases you in his preparations for work? If you have seen pictures of markets in Holland, you will readily appreciate the scene about the cab. Why is the author's quiet persistence interesting? Where does he show his appreciation of a good joke even at his own expense? What traits of human nature are exhibited by the officer and the jeering crowd? Treating a trivial event in a lofty and dignified manner is called mock-heroic. Where is humor added to the story in this way?

Technique

Although this story is short, it is well planned. Discuss the *introduction* by comparing it with those in other stories you have studied. Note carefully the *rapidity* of the action, the selection of *details*, and the *background*. Much of the effectiveness of this story lies in the choice of words and the phrasing of the thought. Make a study of such words and phrases. In what way are the *climax* and the *conclusion* in keeping with the tone of the story?

THE FACE OF THE POOR

By MARGARET COLLIER GRAHAM

MR. ANTHONY attached a memorandum to the letter he was reading, and put his hand on the bell.

"Confound them!" he said under his breath, "what do they think I'm made of!"

A negro opened the door, and came into the room with exaggerated decorum.

"Rufus, take this to Mr. Whitwell, and tell him to get the answer off at once. Is any one waiting?"

"Yes, suh, several. One man's been there some-time. Says his name's Busson, suh."

"Send him in."

The man gave his head a tilt forward which seemed to close his eyes, turned pivotally about, and walked out of the room in his most luxurious manner. Rufus never imitated his employer, but he often regretted that his employer did not imitate him.

Mr. Anthony's face resumed its look of prosperous annoyance. The door opened, and a small, roughly dressed man came toward the desk.

"Well, here I am at last," he said in a tone of gentle apology; "I suppose you think it's about time."

The annoyance faded out of Mr. Anthony's face, and left it blank. The visitor put out a work-callous hand.

"I guess you don't remember me; my name's

I was up once before, but you were busy. I
're well; you look hearty."

thony shook the proffered hand, and then

shrank back, with the distrust of geniality which is one of the cruel hardships of wealth.

"I am well, thank you. What can I do for you, Mr. Burson?"

The little man sat down and wiped the back of his neck with his handkerchief. He was bearded almost to the eyes, and his bushy brows stood out in a thatch. As he bent his gaze upon Mr. Anthony it was like some gentle creature peering out of a brushy covert.

"I guess the question's what I can do for you, Mr. Anthony," he said, smiling wistfully on the millionaire; "I hain't done much this far, sure."

"Well?" Mr. Anthony's voice was dryly interrogative.

"When Edmonson told me he'd sold the mortgage to you, I thought certain I'd be able to keep up the interest, but I have n't made out to do even that; you've been kept out of your money a long time, and to tell the truth I don't see much chance for you to get it. I thought I'd come in and talk with you about it, and see what we could agree on."

Mr. Anthony leaned back rather wearily.

"I might foreclose," he said.

The visitor looked troubled. "Yes, you could foreclose, but that would n't fix it up. To tell the truth, Mr. Anthony, I don't feel right about it. I have n't kep' up the place as I'd ought; it's been running down for more'n a year. I don't believe it's worth the mortgage to-day."

Some of the weariness disappeared from Mr. Anthony's face. He laid his arms on the desk and leaned forward.

"You don't think it's worth the mortgage?" he asked.

"Not the mortgage and interest. You see there's over three hundred dollars interest due. I don't be-

lieve you could get more 'n a thousand dollars cash for the place."

"There would be a deficiency judgment, then," said the millionaire.

"Well, that's what I wanted to ask you about. I supposed the law was arranged some way so you'd get your money. It's no more 'n right. But it seems a kind of a pity for you and me to go to law. There ain't nothing between us. I had the money, and you the same as loaned it to me. It was money you'd saved up again' old age, and you'd ought to have it. If I'd worked the place and kep' it up right, it would be worth more, though, of course, property's gone down a good deal. But mother and the girls got kind of discouraged and wanted me to go to peddlin' fruit, and of course you can't do more 'n one thing at a time, and do it justice. Now if you had the place, I expect you could afford to keep it up, and I would n't wonder if you could sell it; but you'd have to put some ready money into it first, I'm afraid."

Mr. Anthony pushed a pencil up and down between his thumb and forefinger, and watched the process with an inscrutable face. His visitor went on:—

"I was thinking if we could agree on a price, I might deed it to you and give you a note for the balance of what I owe you. I'm getting on kind of slow, but I don't believe but what I could pay the note after a while."

Mr. Anthony kept his eyes on his lead pencil with a strange, whimsical smile.

"Edmonson owed me two thousand dollars," he said; "the mortgage really cost me that; at least it was all I got on the debt."

The visitor made a regretful sound with his tongue *against the roof of his mouth.*

"You don't say so! Well, that is too bad."

The thatch above the speaker's eyes stood out straight as he reflected.

"You're worse off than I thought," he went on slowly, "but it don't quite seem as if I ought to be held responsible for that. I had the thousand dollars, and used it, and I'd ought to pay it; but the other — it was a kind of a trade you made — I can't see — you don't think —"

Mr. Anthony broke into his hesitation with a short laugh.

"No, I don't think you're responsible for my blunders," he said, soberly. "You say property has gone down a good deal," he went on, fixing his shrewd eyes on his listener. "A good many other things have gone down. If my money will buy more than it would when it was loaned, some people would say I should n't have so much of it. Perhaps I'm not entitled to more than the place will bring. What do you think about that?" There was a quizzical note in the rich man's voice.

Burson wiped the back of his neck with his handkerchief, dropped it into his hat, and shook the hat slowly and reflectively, keeping time with his head.

"If you'd kep' your money by you, allowin' that you loaned it to me, — because you the same as did, — if you'd kep' it by you or put it in the bank and let it lay idle, you'd 'a' had it. It would n't 'a' gone down any. You had n't ought to lose anything, that I can see, — except, of course, for your mistake about Edmonson. That kind of hurts me about Edmonson. I would n't 'a' thought of it of him. He always seemed a clever sort of fellow."

"Oh, Edmonson's all right," said Mr. Anthony; "he went into some things too heavily, and broke up. I guess he'll make it yet."

Burson looked relieved. "Then he 'll straighten this up with you, after all," he said.

Mr. Anthony whistled noiselessly. "Well, hardly. He considers it straightened."

Burson turned his old hat slowly around between his knees.

"He 's a fair-spoken man, Edmonson; I kind of think he 'll square it up, after all," he said, hopefully. "Anyway, it does n't become me to throw stones till I 've paid my own debts."

The hair that covered the speaker's mouth twitched a little in its effort to smile. He glanced at his companion expectantly.

"Could you come out and take a look at the place?" he asked.

Mr. Anthony slid down in his chair, and clasped his hands across his portliness.

"I believe I 'll take your valuation, Burson," he answered, slowly; "if I find there 's nothing against the property but my mortgage, and you 'll give me a deed and your note for the interest, or, say, two hundred and fifty dollars, we 'll call it square. It will take a few days to look the matter up, a week, perhaps. Suppose you come in at the end of the week. Your wife will sign the deed?" he added, interrogatively.

Burson had leaned forward to get up. At the question he raised his eyes with the look that Mr. Anthony remembered to have seen years ago in small creatures he had driven into corners.

"Mother did n't have to sign the mortgage," he said, halting a little before each word; "the lawyer said it was n't necessary. I don't know if she 'll —"

Mr. Anthony broke into his embarrassment. "Let me see." He put his hand on the bell.

"Ask Mr. Evert to send me the mortgage from

Burson to Edmonson, assigned to me," he said when Rufus appeared.

The negro walked out of the room as if he were carrying the message on his head.

"Mother does n't always see things just as I do," said Burson; "she was willing to sign the mortgage, though," he added, "only she did n't need to; she wanted me to get the money of Edmonson."

He put his hand into his pocket, and a light of discovery came into his face.

"Have a peach," he said, convivially, laying an enormous Late Crawford on the corner of the desk. Mr. Anthony gave an uncomprehending glance at the gift. "Hain't you got a knife?" asked Burson, straightening himself and drawing a bone-handled implement from his pocket; "I keep the big blade for fruit," he said, kindly, as he laid it on the desk.

Mr. Anthony inspected the proffered refreshment with a queer, uncertain smile; then he took the peach from the desk, drew the wastebasket between his knees, opened the big blade of the knife, and began to remove the red velvet skin. The juice ran down his wrists and threatened his immaculate cuffs. He fished a spotless handkerchief from his pocket with his pencil and mopped up the encroaching rivulets. His companion smiled upon him with amiable relish as the dripping sections disappeared.

"I irrigated 'em more than usual this year, and it makes 'em kind of sloppy to eat," he apologized; "it does n't help the flavor any, but most people buy for size. When you 're out peddling and have n't time to cultivate, it's easy to turn on the water. It's about as bad as a milkman putting water in the milk, and I always feel mean about it. I tell mother irrigating's a lazy man's way of farming, but she says water costs

so much here she does n't think it's cheating to sell it for peach-juice."

Rufus came into the room, and bore down upon the pair with deferential disdain. Mr. Anthony gave his fingers a parting wipe, and took the papers from the envelope.

"It's all right, Burson," he said after a little, "you need n't mind about your wife's signature. I'll risk it. Come back in about a week, say Thursday, Thursday at ten, if that suits you. I'll have my attorney look into it."

Burson got up and started out. Then he turned and stood still an instant.

"Of course, I mean to tell mother about the deed," he said; "I would n't want you to think —"

"Oh, certainly, certainly," acquiesced Mr. Anthony with an almost violent waiving of domestic confidence. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Burson." He whirled his revolving-chair toward the desk with a distinct air of dismissal, and picked up the package of papers.

After the door closed, he sat still for some time, looking thoughtfully at the mortgage; then he made a memorandum in ink, with his signature in full, and attached it to the document. Rufus opened the door.

"Mr. Darnell and two other gentlemen, suh."

The millionaire set his jaws. "Show them in, Rufus. Confound it," he said softly, — "confound it, why can't they be honest!"

"Do you mean to tell me, Erastus Burson, that you deeded him this place, and gave him your note for two hundred and fifty dollars you did n't owe him?"

"Why, no, mother; did n't I explain to you there'd be a deficiency judgment?"

"Well, I should say there was. But if anybody's *lackin' judgment* I'd say it was you, not him. The

idea! Why, he's as rich as cream, and you're as poor —"

"Well, his being rich and me being poor has n't got anything to do with it, mother; we're just two men trying to be fair with each other, don't you see? You and the girls would n't want me to be close-fisted and overreachin', even if I am poor. I think we fixed it up just as near right as a wrong thing can be fixed. Of course, I don't like to feel the way I do about Edmonson, but Mr. Anthony don't seem to lay up anything again' him, and he's the one that has the right to. Edmonson treated him worse than anybody ever treated me. I don't know just how I'd feel toward a man if he'd treated me the way Edmonson treated Mr. Anthony."

Mrs. Burson laid the overalls she was mending across her knee in a suggestive attitude.

"I don't call it close-fisted or overreachin' to keep a roof over your family's head," she argued; "if the place is n't ours, I suppose we'll have to leave it."

"No; Mr. Anthony wants us to stay here, and take care of the place for the rent. I feel as if I'd ought to keep it up better, but if I'm to peddle fruit and try to pay off the note, I'll have to hustle. I want to do the square thing by him. He's certainly treated me white."

Mrs. Burson fitted a patch on the seat of the overalls, and flattened it down with rather unnecessarily vigorous slaps of her large hand.

"I would n't lose any sleep over Mr. Anthony; I guess he's able to take care of himself," she said, closing her lips suddenly as if to prevent the escape of less amicable sentiments.

"Well, he does n't seem to be," urged her husband, "the way Edmonson's overreached him. My! but

I'd hate to be in that fellow's shoes: doin' dirt to a man that a way!"

Mrs. Burson sighed audibly, and gave her husband a hopelessly uncomprehending look. "You do beat all, Erastus," she said, wearily. "Here's your overalls. I guess you can be trusted with 'em. They're too much patched to give to Mr. Anthony."

Burson returned her look of uncomprehension. Fortunately the marital fog through which two pairs of eyes so often view each other is more likely to dull the outline of faults than of virtues. Mrs. Burson watched her husband not unfondly as he straddled into his overalls and left the room.

"A man does n't have to be very sharp to get the better of Erastus," she said to herself, "but he has to be awful low down; and I s'pose there's plenty that is."

The winter came smilingly on, tantalizing the farmer with sunny indifference concerning drought, and when he was quite despondent sending great purple clouds from the southeast to wash away his fears. By Christmas the early oranges were yellowing. There had been no frost, and Burson's old spring-wagon and unshapely but well-fed sorrel team made their daily round of the valley, and now and then he dropped into Mr. Anthony's office to make small payments on his note. Pitifully small they seemed to the mortgagee, who appeared, nevertheless, always glad to receive them, and gave orders to Rufus, much to that dignitary's disgust, that the fruit-vender should always be admitted. The handful of coin which he so cheerfully piled on the corner of the rich man's desk always remained there until his departure, when Mr. Anthony took an envelope from the safe, swept the payment *into it* without counting, and returned it to its *compartment, making no indorsement on the note.*

"I'd feel better satisfied if you'd drive out sometime and take a look at things," said Burson to his creditor during one of these visits; "you'd ought to get out of the office now and then for your health."

"Maybe I will, Burson," replied the capitalist. "You're not away from home all the time?"

"Oh, no, but I s'pose Sunday's your day off; it's mine. Mother and the girls generally go to church, but I don't. I tell 'm I'll watch, and they can pray. I can't very well go," he added, making haste to counteract the possible shock from his irreverence; "there ain't but one seat in the fruit-wagon, and when the women-folks get their togs on, three's about all that can ride. Come out any Sunday, and stay for dinner. We mostly have chicken."

The following Sunday Mr. Anthony drew up his daintily stepping chestnut at the fruit-peddler's gate. Before he had descended from his shining road-wagon, his host ran down the walk, pulling on his shabby coat.

"Well, now, this is something like!" he exclaimed. "Got a hitching-strap? Just wait till I open the gate; I believe I'd better take your horse inside. There's a post by the kitchen door. My, ain't he a beauty!"

Burson led the roadster through the gate, and Mr. Anthony walked by his side. When the horse was tied, the two men went about the place, and Erastus showed his guest the poultry and fruit trees, commenting on the merits of Plymouth Rocks and White Leghorns as layers, and displaying modest pride in the condition of the orchard.

"I've kep' it up better this year. The rains come along more favorable and the weeds did n't get ahead of me the way they did last winter. Look out, there!" he cried, as Mr. Anthony laid his hand on the head of a Jersey calf that backed awkwardly from under his

grasp. "Don't let her get a hold of your coat-tail; she chawed mine to a frazzle the other day; the girls pet her so much she has no manners."

When the tour of the little farm was finished the two men came back to the veranda, and Erastus drew a rocking-chair from the front room for his guest. It was hung with patchwork cushions of "crazy" design, but Mr. Anthony leaned his tired head against them in the sanest content.

"Now you just sit still a minute," Erastus said, "and I'm a-going to bring you something you hain't tasted for a long time."

He darted into the house, and returned with a pitcher and two glasses.

"Sweet cider!" he announced, with a triumphant smile. "I had a lot of apples in the fall, not big enough to peddle, — you know our apples ain't anything to brag of, — and I just rigged up a kind of hand-press in the back yard, and now and then I press out a pitcher of cider for Sunday. I never let it get the least bit hard; not that I don't like a little tang to it myself, but mother belongs to the W. C. T. U., and it'd worry her."

He darted into the house again, and emerged with a plate of brown twisted cakes.

"Mother usually makes cookies on Saturday, but I can't find anything but these doughnuts. Maybe they won't go bad with the cider."

He poured his guest a glass, and Mr. Anthony drank it, holding a doughnut in one hand, and partaking of it with evident relish.

"It's good, Burson," he said. "May I have another glass and another doughnut?"

His host's countenance fairly shone with delighted hospitality as he replenished the empty glass. There *were crumbs on the floor* when the visitor left, and

flies buzzed about the empty plate and pitcher as Mrs. Burson and her daughters came up the steps.

"Mr. Anthony's been here," said Erastus, cheerfully; "I'm awful sorry you missed him. We had some cider and doughnuts."

The three women stopped suddenly, and stared at the speaker.

"Why, Paw Burson!" ejaculated the elder daughter, "did you give Mr. Anthony doughnuts and cider out here on this porch?"

"Why, yes, Millie," apologized the father; "I looked for cookies, but I could n't find any. He said he liked doughnuts, and he did seem to relish 'em; he eat several."

"That awful rich man! Why, Paw Burson!"

The young woman gave an awe-stricken glance about her, as if expecting to discover some lingering traces of wealth.

"Doughnuts!" she repeated, helplessly.

"Why, Millie," faltered the father, mildly aggressive, "I don't see why being rich should take away a man's appetite; I'm sure I hope I'll never be too rich to like doughnuts and cider."

"Did n't you give him a napkin, paw?" queried the younger girl.

"No," said the father, meekly, "he had his handkerchief. I coaxed him to stay to dinner, but he could n't; and I asked him to drive out some day with his wife and daughter — he has n't but one — they lost a little girl when she was seven —"

The man's voice quivered on the last word, and died away. Mrs. Burson went hurriedly into the house. She reappeared at the door in a few minutes without her bonnet.

"Erastus," she said, gently, "will you split me a few sticks of kindling before you put away the team?"

Mrs. Burson was fitting a salad-green bodice on her elder daughter. That young woman's efforts to see her own spine, where her mother was distributing pins with solemn intentness, had dyed her face a somewhat unnatural red, but the hands that lay upon her downy arms were much whiter than those that hovered about her back. A dining-table, bearing the more permanent part of its outfit, was pushed into a corner of the room, and covered with a yellow mosquito-net, and from the kitchen came a sound of crockery accompanied by an occasional splash and a scraping of tin. Now and then the younger girl appeared in the doorway and gazed in a sort of worshipful ecstacy at her sister's splendor.

"Do you think you'll get it finished for the Fiesta, maw?" she asked, between deep breaths of admiration. Mrs. Burson nodded absently, exploring her bosom for another pin with her outspread palm.

Her husband came into the room, and seated himself on the edge of the rep lounge. His face had a strange pallor above the mask of his beard.

"You're home early, Erastus," she said; then she looked up. "Are you sick?" she asked with anxiety.

"Mr. Anthony is dead," Burson said huskily.

"Dead! Why, Erastus!"

Mrs. Burson held a pin suspended in the air and stared at her husband.

"Yes. He dropped dead in his chair. Or rather, he had some kind of a stroke, and never came to. It happened more than a week ago. I went in to-day, and Rufus told me."

Mrs. Burson returned the pin to her bosom, and motioned her daughter toward the bedroom door.

"Go and take it off, Millie," she said, soberly. She *was shamefacedly* conscious of something different

from the grief that stirred her husband, something more sordid and personal.

"It hurt me all over," Burson went on, "the way some of them talked in town. They looked queer at me when I said what I did about him. I don't understand it."

"I guess there's a good many things you don't understand, Erastus," ventured the wife, quietly.

A carriage stopped at the gate, and a young woman alighted from it, and came up the walk. Erastus saw her first, and met her in the open doorway. She looked at him with eager intentness.

"Is this Mr. Burson?" she asked, gently. "I am Mr. Anthony's daughter."

Mrs. Burson got up, holding the scraps of green silk in her apron, and offered the visitor a seat. Erastus held out his hand, and tried to speak. The two faced each other in tearful silence.

"I wanted to bring you this myself," the girl faltered, "because — because of what is written on the outside." She held a package of papers toward him. "I have heard him speak of you, I think. Any friend of my father must be a good man. We want to thank you, my mother and I —"

"To thank me?" Erastus questioned, — "to thank me! You certainly don't know —"

"I know you were my father's friend," the girl interrupted; "I don't care about the rest. Possibly I could n't understand it. I know very little about business, but I knew my father."

She got up, holding her head high in grief-stricken pride, and gave her hand to her host and hostess.

The younger Burson girl emerged from the kitchen, a dish-towel and a half-wiped plate clasped to her breast, and watched the visitor as she went down the *path*.

"Her silk waist does n't begin to touch Millie's for style," she said, pensively, "and her skirt does n't even drag; but there's something about her."

"Yes," acquiesced Mrs. Burson, "there is something about her."

Erastus sat on the edge of the old rep lounge, looking absently at the papers.

"In the event of my death, to be delivered to my friend Erastus Burson," was written on the package.

His wife came and stood over him.

"I don't know just what it means, mother," he said; "there's a deed, and my note marked 'Paid,' and a lot of two-bit and four-bit pieces. I'll have to get somebody to explain it."

He sat quite still until the woman laid her large hand on his bowed head. Then he looked up, with moist, winking eyes.

"I don't feel right about it, mother," he said. "I wish now I'd 'a' dropped in oftener, and been more sociable. It's a strange thing to say, but I think sometimes he was lonesome; and I'm sure I don't know why, for a kinder, genialer man I never met."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

Through what varying moods did Mr. Anthony pass during his talk with Burson? How do you account for the impression Burson made upon him? What principles in Burson's life are brought out and emphasized by contrast with the views of his wife? Were the girls right or wrong in their criticism of the manner in which their father entertained Mr. Anthony? Why? Where do you find hints of a pleasant vein of humor in Burson? What fine sentiment does he show at the time of Mr. Anthony's death? Were the *millionaire* and the fruit-vender equal "man to man"? *Why?*

Technique

Introduction. Note the shortness of the introduction and the absence of description of the chief characters. *Action begins the story.* What in the contrast between the two men *arouses interest?*

Plot. What chance circumstance brings the millionaire and the fruit-vender together and forms the *basis of the action?* How do the millionaire's impressions of men as determined by business experience and the vender's simple code of honesty *carry the story forward?* Point out where *rapidity of movement* is gained by *omission of unimportant details.*

Character. Which is more important in this story, the *portrayal of character* or the *sketching of personal appearance?* Why? Why does the author give more details of Burson's appearance than of Mr. Anthony's? Note the way in which description of action and personal appearance is brought in point by point as the conversation between the two men proceeds. Study the effectiveness of this method in revealing thought and feeling.

THE GOLDEN FORTUNE

By MARY AUSTIN

A LITTLE way up from the trail that goes toward Rex Monte, not far from the limit of deep snows, there is what looks to be a round dark hole in the side of the mountain. It is really the ruined tunnel of an old mine. Formerly a house stood on the ore dump at one side of the tunnel, a little unpainted cabin of pine; but a great avalanche of snow and stones carried them, both the house and the dump, away. The cabin was built and owned by a solitary miner called Jerry, and whether he ever had any other name no one in the town below Kearsarge now remembers.

Jerry was old and lean, and his hair, which had been dark when he was young, was now bleached to the color of the iron-rusted rocks about his mine. For thirty years he had prospected and mined through that country from Kearsarge to the Coso Hills, but always in the pay of other men, and at last he had hit upon this ledge on Rex Monte. To all who looked, it showed a very slender vein between the walls of country rock, and the ore of so poor a quality that with all his labor he could do no more than keep alive; but to all who listened, Jerry could tell a remarkable story of what it had been, and what he expected it to be. Very many years ago he had discovered it at the end of a long prospect, when he was tired and quite discouraged for that time. There was not much passing then on the Rex Monte, and Jerry drew out of the trail here in the middle of the afternoon to rest in the shadow of *a great rock*. So while he lay there very weary, be-

tween sleeping and waking, he gazed out along the ground, which was all strewn with rubble between the stiff, scant grass. As he looked it seemed that certain bits of broken stone picked themselves out of the heap, and grew larger, in some way more conspicuous, until, Jerry averred, they winked at him. Then he reached out to draw them in with his hand, and saw that they were all besprinkled with threads and specks of gold. You may guess that Jerry was glad, then that he sprang up and began to search for more stones, and so found a trail of them, and followed it through the grass stems and the heather until he came to the ledge cropping out by a dike of weathered rocks. And in those days the ledge was ah, so rich! Now it seemed that Jerry was to have a mine of his own. So he named it the "Golden Fortune," and told no man what he had found, but went down to the town which lies in a swale at the foot of Kearsarge, and brought back as much as was needful for working the mine in a simple way.

It was nearing the end of the summer, when the hills expect the long thunder and drumming rain, and, not many weeks after that, the quiet storms that bring the snow. Jerry had enough to do to make all safe and comfortable at the Golden Fortune before winter set in. It was too steep here on the hill-slope for the deep snows to trouble him much, so he built his cabin against the rock, with a covered way from it to the tunnel of the mine, that he might work on all winter at no unease because of storms.

It was perhaps a month later, with Jerry as busy as any of the wild folk thereabout, and the nights turning off bitter cold with frost. Of mornings he could hear the thin tinkle of the streams along fringes of delicate ice. It was the afternoon of a day that fell warm and dry with a promise of snow in the air.

Jerry was roofing in his cabin, so intent that a voice hailed him before he was aware that there was a man on the trail. Jerry knew at once by his dress and his speech that he was a stranger in those parts, and he saw that he was not very well prepared for the mountain passes and the night. He knew this, I say, with the back of his mind, but took no note of it, for he was so occupied with his house and his mine. He suffered a fear to have any man know of his good fortune lest it should somehow slip away from him. So when the stranger asked him some questions of the trail, it seemed that what Jerry most wished was to get rid of him as quickly as possible. He was a young man, ruddy and blue-eyed, and a foreigner, what was called, in careless miners' talk, "some kind of a Dutchman," and could not make himself well understood. Jerry gathered that he desired to know if he were headed right for the trail that went over to the Bighorn Mine, where he had the promise of work. So they nodded and shrugged, and Jerry made assurance with his hands, as much as to say, it is no great way; and when the young man had looked wistfully at the cabin and the boding sky, he moved slowly up the trail. When he came to the turn where it goes toward Rex Monte, he lingered on the ridge to wave good-bye, so Jerry waved again, and the man dropped out of sight. At that moment the sun failed behind a long gray film that deepened and spread over all that quarter of the sky.

Jerry had cause to remember the stranger in the night and fret for him, for the wind came up and began to seek in the cañon, and the snow fell slanting down. It fell three days and nights. All that while the gray veil hung about Jerry's house; now and then the wind would scoop a great lane in it to show how *the drifts lay on the heather*, then shut in tight and

dim with a soft, weary sound, and Jerry, though he worked on the Golden Fortune, could not get the young stranger out of his mind.

When the sun and the frost had made a crust over the snow able to bear up a man, he went over the Pass to Bighorn to inquire if the stranger had come in, though he did not tell at that time, nor until long after, how late it was when the man passed his cabin, how wistfully he turned away, nor what promise was in the air. The snow lay all about the Pass, lightly on the pines, deeply in the hollows, so deeply that a man might lie under it and no one be the wiser. And there it seemed the stranger must be, for at the Bighorn they had not heard of him, but if he were under the snow, there he must lie until the spring thaw. Of whatever happened to him, Jerry saw that he must bear the blame, for, by his own account, from that day the luck vanished from the Golden Fortune; not that the ore dwindled or grew less, but there were no more of the golden specks. With all he could do after that, Jerry could not maintain himself in the cabin on the slope of Rex Monte. So it came about that the door was often shut, and the picks rusted in the tunnel of the Golden Fortune for months together, while Jerry was off earning wages in more prosperous mines.

All his days Jerry could not quite get his mind away from the earlier promise of the mine, and as often as he thought of that he thought of the stranger whom he had sent over the trail on the evening of the storm. Gradually it came into his mind in a confused way that the two things were mysteriously connected, that he had sent away his luck with the stranger into the deep snow. For certainly Jerry held himself accountable, and in that country between Kearsarge and the Coso Hills to be inhospitable is *the worst offense*.

Every year or so he came back to the mine to work a little, and sometimes it seemed to promise better and sometimes not. Finally, Jerry argued that the luck would not come back to it until he had made good to some other man the damage he had done to one. This set him looking for an opportunity. Jerry mentioned his belief so often that he came at last, as is the way of miners, to accept it as a thing prophesied of old time. Afterward, when he grew old himself, and came to live out his life at the Golden Fortune, he would be always looking along the trail at evening time for passers-by, and never one was allowed to go on who could by any possibility be persuaded to stay the night in Jerry's cabin. Often when there was a wind, and the snow came slanting down, Jerry fancied he heard one shouting in the drift; then he would light a lantern and sally forth into the storm, peering and crying.

About that time, when he went down into the town below Kearsarge once in a month or so for supplies, the people smiled and wagged their heads, but Jerry conceived that they whispered together about the unkindness he had done to the stranger so many years gone, and he grew shy and went less often among men. So he companioned more with the wild things, and burrowed deeper into the hill. His cabin weathered to a semblance of the stones, rabbits ran in and out at the door, and deer drank at his spring.

From the slope where the cabin stood, the trail which led up from the town, winding with the winding of the cañon, went over the Pass, and so into a region of high meadows and high, keen peaks, the feeding-ground of deer and mountain sheep. The ravine of Rex Monte was the easiest going from the high valleys to the foothills, where all winter the feed *kept green*. Every year Jerry marked the trooping of

the wild kindred to the foothill pastures when the snow lay heavily on all the higher land, and saw their returning when the spring pressed hard upon the borders of the melting drifts. So, as he grew older and stayed closer by his mine, Jerry learned to look to the furred and feathered folk for news of how the seasons fared, and what was doing on the high ridges. When the grouse and quail went down, it was a sign that the snow had covered the grass and small seed-bearing herbs; the passing of deer — shapely bulks in a mist of cloud — was a portent of deep drifts over the buckthorn and the heather. Lastly, if he saw the light fleeting of the mountain sheep, he looked for wild and bitter work on the crest of Kearsarge and Rex Monte. It was mostly at such times that Jerry heard voices in the storm, and he would go stumbling about with his lantern into the swirl of falling snow, until the wind that played up and down the great cañon, like the drafts in a chimney, made his very bones a-cold. Then he would creep back to drowse by the warmth of his fire and dream that the blue-eyed stranger had come back and brought the luck of the Golden Fortune. So he passed the years until the winter of the Big Snow. It was so called many winters after, for no other like it ever fell on the east slope of Kearsarge.

It came early in the season, following a week of warm weather, when the sky was full of a dry mist that showed ghostly gray against the sun and the moon; great bodies of temperate air moved about the pines with a sound of moaning and distress. The deer, warned by their wild sense, went down before ever a flake fell, and Jerry, watching, shivered in sympathy, recalling that so they had run together, and such a spell of warm weather had gone before a *certain snow*, years ago before the luck departed from

the Golden Fortune. As the fume of the storm closed in about the cabin, and flakes began to form lightly in the middle air, the old man's wits began to fumble among remembrances of the stranger on the trail, and he would hearken for voices. The snow began, then increased, and fell steadily, wet and blinding.

The third night of its falling Jerry waked out of a doze to hear his name shouted, muffled and feebly, through the drift. So it seemed to him, and he made haste to answer it. There was no wind; on the very steep slope where the cabin stood was a knee-deep level, soft and clogging; in the hollows it piled half-way up the pines. Jerry's lantern threw a faint and stifled gleam. There was no further cry, but something struggled on the trail below him; dim, unhuman shapes wrestled in the smother of the snow. Jerry sent them a hail of assurance cut off short by the white wall of the storm.

There was a little sag in the hill-front where the trail turned off to the cabin, and here the moist snow fell in a lake, into which the trail ran like a spit, and was lost. Down this trail at the last fierce end of the storm came the great wild sheep, the bighorn, the heaviest-headed, lightest-footed, winter-proof sheep of the mountains that God shepherds on the high battlements of the hills. Down they came when there was no meadow, nor thicket, nor any smallest twig of heather left uncovered on the highlands, and took the lake of soggy snow by Jerry's cabin in the dark. They had come far under the weight of the great curved horns through the clogging drifts. Here where the trail failed in the white smudge they found no footing, floundered at large, sinking belly-deep where they stood, and not daring to stand lest they sink deeper. *If any cry of theirs, hoarse and broken, had reached old Jerry's dreaming, they spent no further breath on it.*

By something the same sense that made him aware of their need, Jerry understood rather than saw them strain through the falling veil of snow. It was a sharp struggle without sound as they won out of the wet drift to the firmer ground. They went on like shadows pursued by the ghost of a light that wavered with the old man's wavering feet. It was no night for a man to be abroad in, but Jerry ploughed on in the drift till he found the work that was cut out for him. There where the snow was deepest, yielding like wool, he found the oldest wether of the flock, sunk to the shoulders, too feeble for the struggle, and still too noble for complaining. How many years had Jerry waited to do a good turn on the trail where he had done his worst: and in all these years he had lost the sense of distinction which should be between man and beast. He put his shoulder under the fore shoulder of the sheep, where he could feel the heart pound with certain fear.

Jerry knew the trail, as he knew the floor of his mine, by the feel of the ground under him; so as he heaved and guided with his shoulder, the great ram grew quieter and lent himself to the effort till they came clear of the swale, and the sweat ran down from Jerry's forehead. But the bighorn could do no more. In the soft fleece of the snow he stood cowed and trembling. The snow came on faster, and wiped out the trail of the flock; he made no motion to go after. Such a death comes to the wild sheep of the mountains often enough: to fail from old age in some sudden storm, to sink in the loose snow and await the quest of the wolf, or the colder mercy of the drift. He turned his back to the storm which began to slant a little with the rising wind, and looked not once at Jerry nor at the hills where he had been bred. But *Jerry cast his eye upon the sheep, which was full*

heavier than than he, and then up at the steep where his cabin stood, remembering that he had nothing there that might serve a sheep for food. Then he bent down again, and by dint of pulling and pushing, and by a dim sense that began to filter through the man's brain to the beast, they made some progress on the trail. They went over broken boulders and floundered in the drifts, where Jerry half carried the sheep and was half borne up and supported by the spread of the great horns. They crossed Pine Creek, which ran dumbly under the snow, housed over by the stream tangle. The flakes hissed softly on Jerry's lantern and struck blindingly on his eyes, but ever as they went the sheep was eased of his labor, grew assured, and carried himself courageously. Finally they came where the storm thinned out, and whole hill-slopes covered with buckthorn and cherry warded off the snow by springy arches, and Jerry drew up to rest under a long-leaved pine while the sheep went on alone, nodding his great horns under the branches of the scrub. He neither lingered nor looked back, and met the new chance of life with as much quietness as the chance of death. Jerry was worn and weary, and there was a singing in his brain. The pine trees broke the wind and shed off the snow in curling wreaths. It seemed to the old man most good to rest, and he drowsed upon his feet.

"If I sleep I shall freeze," he said; and it seemed on the whole a pleasant thing to do. So it went on for a little space; then there came a shape out of the dark, a hand shook him by the shoulder, and a voice called him by name. Then he started out of dreaming as he had started at that other call an hour ago, and it seemed not strange to him, the night, nor the storm, nor the face of the blue-eyed man that shone *out of the dark*, but whether by the light of his lan-

tern he could not tell. He shook the snow from his shoulders.

"I have expected you long," he said.

"And now I have come," said the stranger and smiled.

"Have you brought the luck again?"

"Come and see," said the man.

Then Jerry took his hand and leaned upon him, and together they went up the trail between the drifts.

"You bear me no ill-will for what I did?" said Jerry.

And the stranger answered, "None."

"I have wished it undone many times," said the old man. "I have tried this night to repay it."

"By what you have done this night I am repaid," said the stranger.

"It was only a sheep."

"It was one of God's creatures," said the man.

So they went on up the trail, and it seemed sometimes to Jerry that he wandered alone in the dark, that he was cold, and his lantern had gone out; and again he would hear the stranger comfort and encourage him. At last they came toward the cabin, and saw the light stream out of the window and the fire leap in the stove. Then Jerry thought of the mine, and that the stranger had brought back the luck again. It seemed that the young man had promised him this, though he could not be sure of that, nor very clear in his mind on any point except that he had come home again. But as he drew near, it seemed a brightness came out of the tunnel of the mine, a warmth and a great light. As he came into it tremblingly, he saw that the light came from the walls, and from the lode at the far end of it, and it was *the brightness of pure gold*. And Jerry smiled and

stretched out his arms to it, making sure that the luck had come again.

After the week of the Big Snow there were people in the town who remembered Jerry, and wondered how he fared. So when the snow had a crust over it, they came up by the windy cañon and sought him in his house, where the door stood open and a charred wick flared feebly in the lamp, and in his mine, where they found him at the far end of the tunnel, and it seemed as if he slept and smiled.

"It is a worthless lode," they said, "but he loved it."

So they took powder and made a blast, and with it a great heap of stones, shutting off the end of the tunnel from the outer air, and so left him with his luck and the Golden Fortune.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

What did the discovery of the Golden Fortune mean to Jerry in the way of satisfying his wishes in life? Contrast this glowing thought with his thirty years of lonely, fruitless toil. In his endeavor to make life give him the thing he desired, what controlling impulses guided him? How did these impulses influence his action and determine his life in the future?

What whims and vain longings of his heart bore him up through many years of effort to repair his mistake? Do you think his last effort and his feverish death dream a fitting and natural end of his life? Why? What impressior does this man's destiny make upon you?

Technique

Introduction. In what way is mystery used to *arouse interest*? Why could not conversation have been used to introduce the chief character? Note the moment of *intense feeling* at which he is introduced. What few details *give the scene*?

Plot. What two overmastering passions of Jerry's life form the *basis of the action*? How is the thwarting of his purposes used to intensify action and emotion? Keeping in mind the long period of Jerry's life covered in the story, can you show the author's skillful *selection of events* to serve her purpose?

Character. This is a story of *character development* under influences prompting or determining action. Why are there so few details of Jerry's personal appearance? Indicate passages where his inner life of thought and feeling are vividly and quickly portrayed.

Background. In what way does description aid the story? Find descriptions that have power to arouse your imagination in picturing scenes and events in Jerry's life. Find those that appeal to your sense of what is beautiful and awe inspiring in nature. What emotions does the description arouse as it forms the *setting* for this adventurer's life?

A HAMERTON TYPEWRITER

BY ELIZA ORNE WHITE

RICHARD COPLEY ARMSTRONG, the rising young novelist, was sitting in his study in an attitude of profound thought. So absorbed was he, as he bent over his typewriter, that he did not hear the announcement of his maid-of-all-work that dinner was ready. This appellation, by the way, is scarcely the right one to apply to the buxom matron of fifty who stood in the doorway with her arms akimbo and shouted, "Dinner, dinner, Mr. Richard!"

The young man raised his head at last, and said thoughtfully, "U, I, O, P, — that stands for 'You I owe; patience.'"

"He's gone clean daft over that little machine of his'n," said the unsympathetic Mrs. Bassett. "Patience! that is certainly just what is needed in this house; but as for owing me, you don't; you paid me every stiver of my wages last Saturday night."

Mr. Armstrong bent his head over the typewriter again, and murmured, "D, F, G, H; or, 'darned fool, go home.' Oh, I had forgotten that you were here, Mrs. Bassett," he said, good-naturedly. He had not been addressing her, — he was merely trying to learn the alphabet of his typewriter, by associating words with the letters.

That evening he struggled for a long time over a note to his friend, John Lawson. It was written on the typewriter, and ran as follows: —

Dear Hack,

*i am in despaor/my eyes have guvem out utterly/ the
oxxulist says i must not writ one word. i infested in*

this typewriter at his suggestion bevause i am in the niddle of my novel 2 AN EXperiment in CHArity?" and the 2Metroopolis Maxagine 2is awaiting the next chapter. i am not allowed even too look at what i writ or at the type)writer ketters themselves, but am lerning to use the mavine as the blinddo. so if there are one or two mistakes in this epistel forgibe them. MRs. BAssett is too illiter ate to help me. i have learned the letters from a man from the oggice of the 2Hamerton type)write2 so alli need is a little practise? vut it has taken me || hours to accomplish this brief note. for the love of heavem come and stay with me and be my ammennuensus until iget the nest number of my novek finixed/

your devoted fiend ,

richard COpley armstrong/

december 3th, 1 ' ' (/

He received the following answer by return of mail:—

Dear richard :—

I adopt the small "r" since you so evidently prefer it. I am very, very sorry, my poor, devoted "fiend," but your dear old "literary?" hack is too deep in his own work to be able to spare any time for you. I wish he could. I will suggest that you get a professional typewriter to come to you every day until your novel is finished. Don't delude yourself, my dear boy, into thinking that you will be able to do work fit for the press, on your typewriter, alone and unassisted.

Regretfully yours,

JACK.

P. S. The date of your letter is charmingly mysterious, and suggests that you have been sojourning in *eternity* rather than time.

As the outgrowth of the proposition made by John Lawson, a young lady came every morning at ten o'clock to the study of Richard Armstrong, and worked there patiently for three hours. I say patiently advisedly; for although Richard was generally a charming companion and was thought fascinating by all women, fascination is not a quality that tells in a man when he has a rooted dislike to dictation and a nervous temperament.

After a week of progress in company with the amanuensis, Richard received a letter from his friend containing these inquiries: "Why do you never mention the typewriter? Is she satisfactory?"

In answer, the exasperated Richard wrote the following note:—

Dear Jack:)

Will you be so hood as to remember in future that i am not allowed to use my eyes at all, and so can8t read my notes. Your letters have to be fead to me either by the typewrite herself, or by my AUNT Hammah whose house i am manning at presemnt. This excellent lady read your last epidle and was hoffifoed. AS she is going away for two months miss grey will read the others. miss GREY is not pretty. She is nothing but a machine, a verry usefull skilful? and caluable Hamerton typewrite, but no more. i think o of her as a part of the mavhine she works. It is a signifidant fact that both have the same appellattion? both are typewrites.

Yours in great haste,
dick/

p/s/ Have i not improved greatly in my typewriting?

DEcemberi&th.

It was true that Miss Grey was not pretty, but she had a charming face and simple, unobtrusive manners. She came day after day and took her place quietly in Richard's study, never talking unless she were addressed, but when she was consulted always suggesting some way of disentangling the knotty problem under discussion. Her voice was low and agreeable, and she was altogether a pleasant feature in Richard's solitary life. After a time he grew to look forward to her daily appearance, and to take a certain interest in her personality. He could not help himself; every woman interested him more or less, from his great-aunt down to the little girl who brought him his weekly washing. Miss Grey was far from being the contemporary of his aunt; she could not be more than twenty-five or six.

At the end of a fortnight Miss Grey and Mr. Armstrong had accomplished the number of his novel for which the *Metropolis Magazine* had been waiting so impatiently.

"I suppose you will not want me any longer," she said, as she put on her jacket and gloves preparatory to taking her departure.

"Indeed I shall; I am not going to get myself into such another tight box with my next number. I shall want you straight on until the end of the chapter — the novel, I mean."

"Monday is Christmas," she reminded him, "so you probably will not care to have me come again for some days. I wish you a very merry Christmas," she added, as she extended her hand to him.

"I am not going home," he rejoined, keeping her hand absently in his for a moment, and then dropping it with a sigh; "and I shall not have a merry Christmas, but on the contrary a signally dismal one. Come on Christmas and help me to get through with the

day," he went on rapidly. He could see that her eyes were beautiful as well as kind, as she raised them to his with a questioning glance.

"I am sorry that you cannot go home," she said.

"I do not wish to go home," he returned, quickly; "I don't want to be reminded of last Christmas."

Had Miss Grey expressed a keen interest in his revelations, it is probable that the young man would have stopped making them; but she said nothing more, and yet he knew that she was sorry for him, and because of this fact, and for the reason that he had received no sympathy for a long time, he felt impelled to proceed.

"Last Christmas I was engaged," he said, "but the girl whom I was to marry has married another man."

Afterward he thought what a fool he had been to tell this fact in his history to his amanuensis; and why, at least, could he not have accomplished the feat gracefully, instead of blurting it out in that school-boy fashion? He attacked his typewriter with virulence. D, F, stood emphatically for what he was himself, and it was with peculiar satisfaction that he said over and over again, "*Darned fool, darned fool, go home.*"

His studies were interrupted at this point by Mrs. Bassett, who had thrust her bulky person into the range of his vision.

"Yes, sir," she said; "you've called me a 'darned fool' once too often; I'm taking of your advice, sir; I'm 'going home.'"

"Mrs. Bassett!" he cried, aghast, "I can't get along without you. I was not speaking to you; I was merely addressing the typewriter."

"It's all the same thing, sir. There is one 'fool' *in this house, that's sure.* If it's me, I'd better leave;

but if it's you, — why, I never calculated to get along with folly. Since that machine come, you've ben clean crazy. Take your choice. Keep your Hamerton typewriter, or keep me. Give it up, or give me up. I won't live in the same house with the uncanny thing any longer."

He took his choice, and as a consequence Mrs. Bassett departed, and the Hamerton typewriter remained.

On Christmas morning Richard Armstrong was almost too ill to get up. He managed, however, to stagger downstairs to his study. He laid his wretched feelings to the poorly cooked food which had followed upon Mrs. Bassett's departure. When Miss Grey came in the afternoon, she found him flushed and feverish, and in great pain.

"You must not try to work," she said, "and you must let me go for a doctor. I am afraid you have the grippe."

Richard, however, insisted upon dictating, as he said his brain had never been so full of ideas. He grew more and more excited as they worked, until Frances Grey became seriously alarmed. Finally, she heard a dull thud, and upon looking in his direction she saw that he had fallen to the floor in a dead faint. She was now thoroughly frightened. She was a sufficiently good nurse to succeed in restoring her patient to partial consciousness, but almost as soon as he came out of his faint turn he grew delirious.

Mr. Armstrong and Miss Grey were alone in the house, and therefore she could not leave him to go for a doctor. What should she do? How could she obtain aid? She glanced at the tall, old-fashioned clock, whose hands were pointing to five minutes of four. She had not realized that they had worked so long, but twilight was in fact fast approaching, and *she ought to be starting for home.*

She ran to the front window, and shouted "Help! help!" at the top of her voice. No response came, for Richard Armstrong lived in a house with as much land around it as if it were not situated in one of the nearest suburbs of a great city. She rang a bell which she found in the dining-room, but even its insistent peals produced no effect. After this she went back into the study to look at her patient, who was moaning and tossing restlessly on the sofa. At last she ran down the long avenue at full speed, crying, "Help, help!"

A little boy was sauntering past on the other side of the street. He eyed her with interest.

"Is it a fire or a murder, missis?" he asked.

"A gentleman is very ill," she said. "I will give you this half-dollar if you will go for the nearest doctor, and tell him to come here immediately, to this house, — you understand? — to see Mr. Richard Armstrong."

Half an hour passed, then another half-hour, and still another; yet neither boy nor doctor appeared. The tall old mahogany clock in the corner was striking six in its silvery voice. A clock seems so alive and companionable, that it is a disappointment to find it strikes in the same bland unvarying way when we ourselves are racked with anxiety. Frances Grey was tempted to stop the timepiece, that its measured, dignified ticking and its imperturbable striking might cease.

It was now as dark as if it were midnight. Miss Grey realized that there was little chance of her being rescued by her friends; for her landlady would think that she had gone directly to the house of Mrs. Grant, where she had promised to assist at some Christmas festivities. Laura Grant, on the other hand, would *imagine that she was belated in some way, and would*

not feel anxious about her. Self-reliance was not an inborn quality with Frances, but an acquired one; and she felt very lonely and helpless as she sat in Mr. Armstrong's study, watching his irregular breathing, and wondering whether the simple remedies at her command had been the right ones.

Half past six, and still no doctor! She would make one more effort to secure a messenger. She was about putting on her fur cape when she heard a stifled voice from the sofa.

"Don't go," Richard begged. "Q, W, E, R, T, Y, — Queen, worthy, that's how I remember the letters, — worthy Queen, my Queen, don't go. U, I, O, P, patience. A, S, darned fool, go, — no, that is not so good as the other; what is the other?" He pressed his hand wearily to his head. "I have it now," he said at last: "Dear Frances Grey, heavenly jabberer, or was it jackknife? Don't go, heavenly jabberer."

Frances sank into an armchair and laughed hysterically.

"I am coming back," she said, gently, when she had recovered her voice.

Richard, however, seized her hand, and would not let her go. Throughout all his delirious wanderings, it seemed to comfort him to feel her presence.

The moments were like hours to Frances, and the hours like days. It was now eight o'clock, and she began to wonder if she would have to spend a long night alone with her charge. Could the boy have proved faithless? He had an honest face.

At length, just before nine o'clock, she heard the welcome sound of wheels on the gravel outside, and presently the doctor entered the room. He had been too busy with cases of grippe to come any earlier in the day. He was a bluff and burly old gentleman,

with a kind face, but a rough manner. He examined the patient carefully and listened to a description of his symptoms given by Miss Grey.

"It is a case of grippe," he said; "a very extreme case, aggravated by some mental trouble. What has he on his mind?"

"The Hamerton typewriter," the patient moaned; "the best in the market, the most easily mastered by those who cannot see. Only one set of letters, but you must be careful to press the stop for the capitals Z, X, C, V, 'Zealous Xerxes collects violins'; that's how I remember them; but the question-marks and the periods are the hardest."

The doctor left the usual prescriptions for grippe, and promised to call again on the following morning.

"I think your brother is not going to be very ill," he said, kindly.

"He is no relation of mine," said Miss Grey, "and not even a friend. I am merely his amanuensis, and I am alone in the house with him. You *must* send a nurse."

"It is impossible," the doctor rejoined. "All the nurses are engaged. I have not been able to get hold of one all day."

Frances implored him to at least find some woman to keep her company, that she might not have to bear the strain of a solitary, anxious night. "We ought to telegraph to his mother," she suggested.

"Yes," Dr. Marston agreed, "and I will send the telegram if you will write it out for me."

Frances sank helplessly into a chair. "I do not know in what part of the world she lives," she explained. "We will ask him; perhaps he may tell us, in a moment of intelligence."

The doctor approached Richard, and said distinctly, "*Where does your mother live?*"

The young man looked at him blandly, and murmured, with a beaming smile, his favorite refrain, "Darned fool, go home."

"Look here," said the doctor, "I won't be insulted."

"He is wandering in his mind, poor fellow!" Frances said. "I will ask him." She came close to him, and said gently, "Mr. Armstrong, it is I, Miss Grey, the typewriter."

"Best machine in the market," he muttered.

"Yes, the Hamerton is the best," she said, soothingly; "but we are talking of your mother, Mrs. Armstrong. Where does she live?"

"Be sure to press your interrogations, or you will get a figure 2," he observed in a confiding tone; "a figure 2 looks badly in the manuscript."

"It is of no use," Frances said, with a sigh; "we must find out his mother's address in some other way."

"J, K, L stands for John Kingsley Lawson," Richard murmured.

"That is true. We can send the message through his friend, Mr. Lawson," she suggested, "and ask him to forward the news to Mrs. Armstrong."

That was the longest night that Frances ever spent. The doctor sent one of his own servants to stay with her, but the woman was too frightened and inexperienced to be of any assistance. Mr. Armstrong was delirious the greater part of the night, but at length he fell into a troubled sleep, from which he would awake every few moments to mutter crazy ejaculations, or to seize Miss Grey's hand and beg her not to leave him. "Please stay, dear fool, until the end of the chapter," he said over and over again.

"Of course I will stay," Frances answered, kindly, "as long as you want me; to the very last of the book, and it is going to be a great novel."

Toward morning he awoke again, and his mind seemed clearer. "Have I been very ill?" he asked. "My head is a trifle confused. I hope I was quite polite."

"You were — most considerate," Frances replied in reassuring tones. It was a small matter to have been addressed in uncivil language by a man whose heart was in the right place, if his head were in the wrong one.

He sighed. "I am glad; I am very glad. I thought I might possibly have called you a 'darn ——' but it's all right since I did n't."

A sharp spasm of pain seized him. He looked up with a wan smile. "You promised to stay with me to the end of the chapter," he said, faintly. "Perhaps it is nearer being finished than we thought; perhaps it is time to write THE END now."

"Oh, no," said Frances, bending over him with a tearful face; "you will be better, and your novel will be finished, and your mother is coming to-morrow."

He did get better. There were many weary days first, during which his mother and the doctor and Miss Grey had anxious hearts, although they tried to keep cheerful faces; but at last he grew well enough to take his place again in the study, and to begin to work on his novel.

Mrs. Armstrong was a fragile little woman, with too much sentiment for the comfort of her friends, and with the certainty that her son was the only really great American novelist. She was so fond of him that she was jealous of any other influence, and was morally certain that she could be his amanuensis quite as satisfactorily as his new friend. She had overpowered Frances by her gratitude and affection so long as Richard's life hung in the balance; but when *he was well* on the way to recovery, she dismissed her *in a somewhat cavalier fashion*.

Richard had inherited his nervous temperament from his mother, and under the joint management of the mother and son the book remained at a standstill, and Mrs. Armstrong was at last forced reluctantly to admit that it might be best to send for the "type-writer," as otherwise the public would have to wait indefinitely for the completion of "the most glorious American novel." Miss Grey, therefore, was at last summoned, and she came at once, with no apparent feeling of ill-will, and took her place as quietly in the corner of the study as if she had never left it. She found Richard sitting in the large easy-chair, "himself again," although a little pale and thin.

"How good it is to get you back again!" he said, with one of his bright smiles. "I have missed you more than you would believe possible."

He watched her every motion with the same deep satisfaction with which a little boy bends his gaze on his good mamma who has chanced to be absent for a time. What attractive ways she had, and what a charming face! She was a woman whom any man might be proud to call his mother, or his sister; for she would be ideal in either relation. Only a very exceptional man would fall in love with her, Richard thought; for his sex in general is captivated by external charm, or a lively, fascinating manner. To love this woman, one must be on the farther side of an experience which had shown one the deceitfulness of mere personal charm. Richard felt himself to be the one uncommon man who appreciated her.

He began to dictate. They had reached a somewhat dry part of the story, or at least a portion which depended for its interest on delicacy of touch rather than startling incident. The hero, Miles Gre-court, had come to a critical point in his experiment *in charity*. He had set up a small ragamuffin in the

trade of boot-blackening, notwithstanding the urchin's frequently expressed preference for another way of life, and he was now being rewarded by ingratitude.

"'You're an old humbug,' said the quasi-boot-black," Richard dictated, "'goin' around the world thinkin' to do folkses such a pile of good by makin' 'em happy in your way rather than their own. Now, as I told you, I've always had the dream of bein' a newspaper boy, but you insisted upon my bein' a bootblack'—" Richard paused to give Miss Grey time to finish this sentence. "It is of no use," he went on; "I love you in spite of everything. I may say to myself that it is only that I am dependent on you, but I cheat myself with words; I love you, I love you!"

Miss Grey's fingers flew rapidly over the keys, but she said, "Do you think that last sentence in character?"

"In character!" Richard repeated, savagely; "and pray why is it not in character?"

"Because I do not see why the bootblack changed his mind so suddenly."

"The bootblack! Hang the bootblack! I am talking of myself and of you."

"And I am waiting for you to dictate the next paragraph," Frances said in icy tones. Her hands were on the keyboard of the typewriter. Richard seized the one that was nearest him.

"Look here, Miss Grey, will you listen quietly to what I have to say, and let that confounded machine alone?"

"Yes, Mr. Armstrong, if you, on your side, will remember that I am 'only a typewriter.'"

His very words,—but how could she have heard them? He must have said them in his delirium.

"*Miss Grey,*" he went on, with a little break in his

voice, "whatever I may have said when I was not myself, the fact remains that I love you; I have had dreary days without you; I cannot tell —"

"No, you cannot, you must not tell me any more. Believe me, I never dreamed of this. I have liked you as a brother from the very first, because, — I could not tell you then, for it was a secret, — and afterwards Jack sent me a part of your letter, and as you thought of me as 'only a typewriter,' it seemed simpler to go on as we had begun. Do you understand now? It was through Mr. Lawson that I came to you."

"So you are a friend of Jack's. He might have had the grace to tell me so in the beginning; but, my dearest —"

"You do not understand. I am engaged to Jack Lawson."

One ray of hope was still left to Richard.

"You are engaged to be his amanuensis, — his typewriter?" he inquired.

"I am engaged to be married to him; I have promised to stay with him 'to the end of the chapter.'"

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

The enjoyment of this story lies in the quickness of your mind in appreciating the ludicrous. Note the effect of Armstrong's ingenious and novel method of learning to use the typewriter — in the combination of words as a help in remembering the letters on the keyboard — the impression upon his housekeeper — the mingling of aptness and absurdity in his delirious talk. Why are the mistakes in his letters particularly amusing? Note the effect of his inability to read what he writes to his friend, of his not knowing the relations between Miss Grey and Lawson, and of his ignorance of what he said in his delirium. Note the effect of Miss Grey's studied misunderstanding of his attempted proposal.

Technique

Introduction. Compare this introduction with others that you have studied. How well does it serve its purpose?

Plot. The plot has for its theme the complete undoing of Armstrong. How successful has the author been in *inventing conditions* and *situations* that serve her purpose? Where do his own acts, accident, or fate work for his confusion? Discover the manner in which these are linked together to form a *single impression*. Note that the *climax* is also the *conclusion*.

TOM O' THE BLUEB'RY PLAINS

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

THE sky is a shadowless blue ; the noon-day sun glows fiercely ; a cloud of dust rises from the burning road whenever the hot breeze stirs the air, or whenever a farm wagon creaks along, its wheels sinking into the deep sand.

In the distance, where the green of the earth joins the blue of the sky, gleams the silver line of a river.

As far as the eye can reach, the ground is covered with blueberry bushes ; red leaves peeping among green ones ; bloom of blue fruit hanging in full warm clusters,— spheres of velvet mellowed by summer sun, moistened with crystal dew, spiced with fragrance of woods.

In among the blueberry bushes grow huckleberries, "choky pears," and black-snaps.

Gnarled oaks and stunted pines lift themselves out of the wilderness of shrubs. They look dwarfed and gloomy, as if Nature had been an untender mother, and denied them proper nourishment.

The road is a little-traveled one, and furrows of feathery grasses grow between the long, hot, sandy stretches of the wheel-ruts.

The first goldenrod gleams among the loose stones at the foot of the alder bushes. Whole families of pale butterflies, just out of their long sleep, perch on the brilliant stalks and tilt up and down in the sunshine.

Straggling processions of woolly brown caterpillars wend their way in the short grass by the wayside,

where the wild carrot and the purple bull-thistle are coming into bloom.

The song of birds is seldom heard, and the blueberry plains are given over to silence save for the buzzing of gorged flies, the humming of bees, and the chirping of crickets that stir the drowsy air when the summer begins to wane.

It is so still that the shuffle-shuffle of a footstep can be heard in the distance, the tinkle of a tin pail swinging musically to and fro, the swish of an alder switch cropping the heads of the roadside weeds. All at once a voice breaks the stillness. Is it a child's, a woman's, or a man's? Neither, yet all three.

"I'd much d'ruth-er walk in the bloom-in' gy-ar-ding,
An' hear the whis-sle of the jol-ly
swain."

Everybody knows the song, and everybody knows the cracked voice. The master of this bit of silent wilderness is coming home: it is Tom o' the blueb'ry plains.

He is more than common tall, with a sandy beard, and a mop of tangled hair straggling beneath his torn straw hat. A square of wet calico drips from under the back of the hat. His gingham shirt is open at the throat, showing his tanned neck and chest. Warm as it is, he wears portions of at least three coats on his back. His high boots, split in foot and leg, are mended and spliced and laced and tied on with bits of shingle rope. He carries a small tin pail of molasses. It has a bail of rope, and a battered cover with a knob of sticky newspaper. Over one shoulder, suspended on a crooked branch, hangs a bundle of basket stuff,—split willow withes and the like; over the other swings a decrepit, bottomless, three-legged chair.

I call him the master of the plains, but in faith he

had no legal claim to the title. If he owned a habitation or had established a home on any spot in the universe, it was because no man envied him what he chose, and no man grudged him what he took; for Tom was one of God's fools, a foot-loose pilgrim in this world of ours, a poor addle-pated, simple-minded, harmless creature,—in village parlance, a "softy."

Mother or father, sister or brother, he had none, nor ever had, so far as any one knew; but how should people who had to work from sun-up to candlelight to get the better of the climate have leisure to discover whether or no Blueb'ry Tom had any kin?

At some period in an almost forgotten past there had been a house on Tom's particular patch of the plains. It had long since tumbled into ruins and served for firewood, and even the chimney bricks had disappeared one by one, as the monotonous seasons came and went.

Tom had settled himself in an old tool-shop, corn-house, or rude out-building of some sort that had belonged to the ruined cottage. Here he had set up his household gods; and since no one else had ever wanted a home in this dreary tangle of berry bushes, where the only shade came from stunted pines that flung shriveled arms to the sky and dropped dead cones to the sterile earth, here he remained unmolested.

In the lower part of the hut he kept his basket stuff and his collection of two-legged and three-legged chairs. In the course of evolution they never sprouted another leg, those chairs; as they were given to him, so they remained. The upper floor served for his living-room, and was reached by a ladder from the ground, for there was no stairway inside.

No one had ever been in the little upper chamber. When a passer-by chanced to bethink him that Tom's *hermitage* was close at hand, he sometimes turned in

his team by a certain clump of white birches and drove nearer to the house, intending to remind Tom that there was a chair to willow-bottom the next time he came to the village. But at the noise of the wheels Tom drew in his ladder; and when the visitor alighted and came within sight, it was to find the inhospitable host standing in the opening of the second-story window, a quaint figure framed in green branches, the ladder behind him, and on his face a kind of impenetrable dignity, as he shook his head and said, "Tom ain't ter hum; Tom's gone to Bonny Eagle."

There was something impressive about this way of repelling callers; it was as effectual as a door slammed in the face, and yet there was a sort of mendacious courtesy about it. No one ever cared to go further; and indeed there was no mystery to tempt the curious, and no spoil to attract the mischievous or malicious. Any one could see, without entering, the straw bed in the far corner, the beams piled deep with red and white oak acorns, the strings of dried apples and bunches of everlastings hanging from the rafters, and the half finished baskets filled with blown bird's-eggs, pine cones, and pebbles.

No home in the village was better loved than Tom's retreat in the blueberry plains. Whenever he approached it, after a long day's tramp, when he caught the first sight of the white birches that marked the gateway to his estate and showed him where to turn off the public road into his own private grounds, he smiled a broader smile than usual, and broke into his well-known song:—

"I'd much d'ruth-er walk in the bloom-in' gy-ar-ding,
An' hear the whis-sle of the jol-ly

swain."

Poor Tom could never catch the last note. He had

sung the song for more than forty years, but the memory of this tone was so blurred, and his cherished ideal of it so high (or so low, rather), that he never managed to reach it.

Oh, if only summer were eternal! Who could wish a better supper than ripe berries and molasses? Nor was there need of sleeping under roof nor of lighting candle to grope his way to pallet of straw, when he might have the blue vault of heaven arching over him, and all God's stars for lamps, and for a bed a horse blanket stretched over an elastic couch of pine needles. There were two gaunt pines that had been dropping their polished spills for centuries, perhaps, silently adding, year by year, another layer of aromatic springiness to poor Tom's bed. Flinging his tired body on this grateful couch, burying his head in the crushed sweet fern of his pillow with one deep-drawn sigh of pleasure, — there, haunted by no past and harassed by no future, slept God's fool as sweetly as a child.

Yes, if only summer were eternal, and youth as well!

But when the blueberries had ripened summer after summer, and the gaunt pine-trees had gone on for many years weaving poor Tom's mattress, there came a change in the aspect of things. He still made his way to the village, seeking chairs to mend; but he was even more unkempt than of old, his tall figure was bent, and his fingers trembled as he wove the willow strands in and out, and over and under.

There was little work to do, moreover, for the village had altogether retired from business, and was no longer in competition with its neighbors: the dam was torn away, the sawmills were pulled down; husbands and fathers were laid in the churchyard, sons and brothers and lovers had gone West, and mothers and

widows and spinsters stayed on, each in her quiet house alone. "'Tain't no hardship when you get used to it," said the Widow Buzzell. "Land sakes! a lantern's 's good's a man any time, if you only think so, 'n' 'tain't half so much trouble to keep it filled up!"

But Tom still sold a basket occasionally, and the children always gathered about him for the sake of hearing him repeat his well-worn formula, — "Tom allers puts two handles on baskets: one to take 'em up by, one to set 'em down by." This was said with a beaming smile and a wise shake of the head, as if he were announcing a great discovery to an expectant world. And then he would lay down his burden of basket stuff, and, sitting under an apple tree in somebody's side yard, begin his task of willow-bottoming an old chair. It was a pretty sight enough, if one could keep back the tears, — the kindly, simple fellow with the circle of children about his knees. Never a village fool without a troop of babies at his heels. They love him, too, till we teach them to mock.

When he was younger, he would sing,

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the treetop,"

and dance the while, swinging his unfinished basket to and fro for a cradle. He was too stiff in the joints for dancing nowadays, but he still sang the "bloomin' gy-ar-ding" whenever they asked him, particularly if some apple-cheeked little maid would say, "Please, Tom!" He always laughed then, and, patting the child's hand, said, "Pooty gal, — got eyes!" The youngsters danced with glee at this meaningless phrase, just as their mothers had danced years before when it was said to them.

Summer waned. In the moist places the gentian uncurled its blue fringes; purple asters and gay Joe *Pye* waved their colors by the roadside; tall prim-

roses put their yellow bonnets on, and peeped over the brooks to see themselves; and the dusty pods of the milkweed were bursting with their silky fluffs, the spinning of the long summer. Autumn began to paint the maples red and the elms yellow, for the early days of September brought a frost. Some one remarked at the village store that old Blueb'ry Tom must not be suffered to stay on the plains another winter, now that he was getting so feeble, — not if the "seleckmen" had to root him out and take him to the poor-farm. He would surely starve or freeze, and his death would be laid at their door.

Tom was interviewed. Persuasion, logic, sharp words, all failed to move him one jot or tittle. He stood in his castle door, with the ladder behind him, smiling, always smiling (none but the fool smiles always, nor always weeps), and saying to all visitors, "Tom ain't ter hum; Tom's gone to Bonny Eagle: Tom don' want to go to the poor-farm."

November came in surly.

The cheerful stir and bustle of the harvest were over, the corn was shocked, the apples and pumpkins were gathered into barns. The problem of Tom's future was finally laid before the selectmen; and since the poor fellow's mild obstinacy had defeated all attempts to conquer it, the sheriff took the matter in hand.

The blueberry plains looked bleak and bare enough now. It had rained incessantly for days, growing ever colder and colder as it rained. The sun came out at last, but it shone in a wintry sort of way, — like a duty smile, — as if light, not heat, were its object. A keen wind blew the dead leaves hither and thither in a wild dance that had no merriment in it. A blackbird flew under an old barrel by the wayside, and, ruffling himself into a ball, remarked despondently that feathers were no

sort of protection in this kind of climate. A snowbird, flying by, glanced in at the barrel, and observed that anybody who minded a little breeze like that had better join the woodcocks, who were leaving for the South by the night express.

The blueberry bushes were stripped bare of green. The stunted pines and sombre hemlocks looked in tone with the landscape now ; where all was dreary they did not seem amiss.

"Je-whilikins!" exclaimed the sheriff as he drew up his coat collar. "A madhouse is the place for the man who wants to live ou'doors in the winter time ; the poor-farm is too good for him."

But Tom was used to privation, and even to suffering. "Ou'doors" was the only home he knew, and with all its rigors he loved it. He looked over the barren plains, knowing, in a dull sort of way, that they would shortly be covered with snow ; but he had three coats, two of them with sleeves, and the crunch-crunch of the snow under his tread was music to his ears. Then, too, there were a few hospitable firesides where he could always warm himself ; and the winter would soon be over, the birds would come again, — new birds, singing the old songs, — the sap would mount in the trees, the buds swell on the blueberry bushes, and the young ivory leaves push their ruddy tips through the softening ground. The plains were fatherland and mother-country, home and kindred, to Tom. He loved the earth that nourished him, and he saw through all the seeming death in nature the eternal miracle of the resurrection. To him winter was never cruel. He looked underneath her white mantle, saw the infant spring hidden in her warm bosom, and was content to wait. Content to wait ? Content to starve, content to freeze, if only he need not be carried into captivity.

The poor-farm was not a bad place, either, if only

Tom had been a reasonable being. To be sure, when Hannah Sophia Palmer asked old Mrs. Pinkham how she liked it, she answered, with a patient sigh, that "her 'n' Mr. Pinkham hed lived there goin' on nine year, workin' their fingers to the bone, 'most, 'n' yet they had n't been able to lay up a cent!" If this peculiarity of administration was its worst feature, it was certainly one that would have had no terrors for Tom o' the blueb'ry plains. Terrors of some sort, nevertheless, the poor-farm had for him; and when the sheriff's party turned in by the clump of white birches and approached the cabin, they found that fear had made the simple wise. Tom had provisioned the little upper chamber, and, in place of the piece of sacking that usually served him for a door in winter, he had woven a defense of willow. In fine, he had taken all his basket stuff, and, treating the opening through which he entered and left his home precisely as if it were a bottomless chair, he had filled it in solidly, weaving to and fro, by night as well as by day, till he felt, poor fool, as safely intrenched as if he were in the heart of a fortress.

The sheriff tied his horse to a tree, and Rube Hobson and Pitt Packard got out of the double wagon. Two men laughed when they saw the pathetic defense, but the other shut his lips together and caught his breath. (He had been born on a poor-farm, but no one knew it at Pleasant River.) They called Tom's name repeatedly, but no other sound broke the silence of the plains save the rustling of the wind among the dead leaves.

"Numb-head!" muttered the sheriff, pounding on the side of the cabin with his whip-stock. "Come out and show yourself! We know you're in there, and it's no use hiding!"

At last, in response to a deafening blow from Rube,

Hobson's hard fist, there came the answering note of a weak, despairing voice.

"Tom ain't ter hum," it said; "Tom's gone to Bonny Eagle."

"That's all right!" guffawed the men; "but you've got to go some more, and go a diff'rent way. It ain't no use fer you to hold back; we've got a ladder, and by Jiminy! you go with us this time!"

The ladder was put against the side of the hut, and Pitt Packard climbed up, took his jack-knife, slit the woven door from top to bottom, and turned back the flap.

The men could see the inside of the chamber now. They were humorous persons, who could strain a joke to the snapping point, but they felt, at last, that there was nothing especially amusing in the situation. Tom was huddled in a heap on the straw bed in the far corner. The vacant smile had fled from his face, and he looked, for the first time in his life, quite distraught.

"Come along, Tom," said the sheriff kindly; "we're going to take you where you can sleep in a bed, and have three meals a day."

"I'd much d'ruth-er walk in the bloom-in' gy-ar-ding,"

sang Tom quaveringly, as he hid his head in a paroxysm of fear.

"Well, there ain't no bloomin' gardings to walk in jest now, so come along and be peaceable."

"Tom don't want to go to the poor-farm," he wailed piteously.

But there was no alternative. They dragged him off the bed and down the ladder as gently as possible; then Rube Hobson held him on the back seat of the wagon, while the sheriff unhitched the horse. As they *were on the point of starting*, the captive began to

wail and struggle more than ever, the burden of his plaint being a wild and tremulous plea for his pail of molasses.

"Dry up, old softy, or I'll put the buggy robe over your head!" muttered Rube Hobson, who had not had much patience when he started on the trip, and had lost it all by this time.

"By thunder! he shall hev his molasses, if he thinks he wants it!" said Pitt Packard, and he ran up the ladder and brought it down, comforting the shivering creature thus, for he lapsed into a submissive silence that lasted until the unwelcome journey was over.

Tom remained at the poorhouse precisely twelve hours. It did not enter the minds of the authorities that any one so fortunate as to be admitted into that happy haven would decline to stay there. The unwilling guest disappeared early on the morrow of his arrival, and, after some search, they followed him to the old spot. He had climbed into his beloved retreat, and, having learned nothing from experience, had mended the willow door as best he could, and laid him down in peace. They dragged him out again, and this time more impatiently; for it was exasperating to see a man (even if he were a fool) fight against a bed and three meals a day.

The second attempt was little more successful than the first. As a place of residence, the poor-farm did not seem any more desirable or attractive on near acquaintance than it did at long range. Tom remained a week, because he was kept in close confinement; but when they judged that he was weaned from his old home, they loosed his bonds, and — back to the plains he sped, like an arrow shot from the bow, or like a bit of iron leaping to the magnet.

What should be done with him?

Public opinion was divided. Some people declared

that the village had done its duty, and if the "dog-goned lunk-head" wanted to starve and freeze, it was his funeral, not theirs. Others thought that the community had no resource but to bear the responsibility of its irresponsible children, however troublesome they might be. There was entire unanimity of view so far as the main issues were concerned. It was agreed that nobody at the poor-farm had leisure to stand guard over Tom night and day, and that the sheriff could not be expected to spend his time forcing him out of his hut on the blueberry plains.

There was but one more expedient to be tried, a very simple and ingenious but radical and comprehensive one, which, in Rube Hobson's opinion, would strike at the root of the matter.

Tom had fled from captivity for the third time.

He had stolen out at daybreak, and, by an unexpected stroke of fortune, the molasses pail was hanging on a nail by the shed door. The remains of a battered old bushel basket lay on the wood-pile: bottom it had none, nor handles; rotundity of side had long since disappeared, and none but its maker would have known it for a basket. Tom caught it up in his flight, and, seizing the first crooked stick that offered, he slung the dear familiar burden over his shoulder and started off on a jog-trot.

Heaven, how happy he was! It was the rosy dawn of an Indian summer day, — a warm jewel of a day, dropped into the bleak world of yesterday without a hint of beneficent intention; one of those enchanting weather surprises with which Dame Nature reconciles us to her stern New England rule.

The joy that comes of freedom, and the freedom that comes of joy, unbent the old man's stiffened joints. He renewed his youth at every mile. He ran *like a lapwing*. When his feet first struck the sandy

soil of the plains, he broke into the old song of the "bloom-in' gy-ar-ding" and the "jolly swain," and in the marvelous mental and spiritual exhilaration born of the supreme moment he almost grasped that impossible last note. His heart could hardly hold its burden of rapture when he caught the well-known gleam of the white birches. He turned into the familiar path, boy's blood thumping in old man's veins. The past week had been a dreadful dream. A few steps more and he would be within sight, within touch, of home, — home at last! No — what was wrong? He must have gone beyond it, in his reckless haste! Strange that he could have forgotten the beloved spot! Can lover mistake the way to sweetheart's window? Can child lose the path to mother's knee?

He turned, — ran hither and thither, like one distraught. A nameless dread flitted through his dull mind, chilling his warm blood, paralyzing the activity of the moment before. At last, with a sob like that of a frightened child who flies from some imagined evil lurking in darkness, he darted back to the white birches and started anew. This time he trusted to blind instinct; his feet knew the path, and, left to themselves, they took him through the tangle of dry bushes straight to his —

It had vanished!

Nothing but ashes remained to mark the spot, — nothing but ashes! And these, ere many days, the autumn winds would scatter, and the leafless branches on which they fell would shake them off lightly, never dreaming that they hid the soul of a home. Nothing but ashes!

Poor Tom o' the blueb'ry plains!

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

In your study of this story, you should let your mind dwell upon the description of nature. You will feel its beauty in summer and early autumn and its cheerlessness as winter comes on. Your sympathy will be aroused over the pathetic life of this unfortunate man as you appreciate his love of *home* and his dread of the hard fate in store for him.

Technique

Introduction. How does the character of the story determine the manner in which the introduction is written?

Plot. The action is very simple. The happy life of Tom is interrupted by a fate he cannot understand.

Character. Tom's character is portrayed chiefly through suggestion. A few circumstances of his life are told in such a manner that you get a glimpse of his whole life. Trace one suggestion after another and note the simple details by means of which the impressions are suggested.

Background. The setting of this story leaves a pleasant picture in your mind. It is a very good example of *local color*. You may find it interesting to make a study of the way in which description of nature is made to reflect feeling. For example, the oaks are described as *gloomy*. Good description has what is called *life*, or *movement*. For example, the oaks and stunted pines are described as *lifting themselves*. Find other examples of this.

MY COUSIN THE COLONEL

By THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

I

MRS. WESLEY frequently embarrasses me by remarking in the presence of other persons — our intimate friends, of course — “ Wesley, you are not brilliant, but you are good.”

From Mrs. Wesley’s outlook, which is that of a very high ideal, there is nothing uncomplimentary in the remark, nothing so intended, but I must confess that I have sometimes felt as if I were paying a rather large price for character. Yet when I reflect on my cousin the colonel, and my own action in the matter, I am ready with gratitude to accept Mrs. Wesley’s estimate of me, for if I am not good, I am not anything. Perhaps it is an instance of my lack of brilliancy that I am willing to relate certain facts which strongly tend to substantiate this. My purpose, however, is not to prove either my goodness or my dullness, but to leave some record, even if slight and imperfect, of my only relative. When a family is reduced like ours to a single relative, it is well to make the most of him. One should celebrate him annually, as it were.

One morning in the latter part of May, a few weeks after the close of the war of the rebellion, as I was hurrying down Sixth Avenue in pursuit of a heedless horse-car, I ran against a young person whose shabbiness of aspect was all that impressed itself upon me in the instant of collision. At a second glance I saw that this person was clad in the uniform of a Confederate

soldier — an officer's uniform originally, for there were signs that certain insignia of rank had been removed from the cuffs and collar of the threadbare coat. He wore a wide-brimmed felt hat of a military fashion, decorated with a tarnished gilt cord, the two ends of which, terminating in acorns, hung down over his nose. His butternut trousers were tucked into the tops of a pair of high cavalry boots, of such primitive workmanship as to suggest the possibility that the wearer had made them himself. In fact, his whole appearance had an impromptu air about it. The young man eyed me gloomily for half a minute; then a light came into his countenance.

"Wesley — Tom Wesley!" he exclaimed. "Dear old boy!"

To be sure I was Thomas Wesley, and, under conceivable circumstances, dear old boy; but who on earth was he?

"You don't know me?" he said, laying a hand on each of my shoulders, and leaning back as he contemplated me with a large smile in anticipatory enjoyment of my surprise and pleasure when I should come to know him. "I am George W. Flagg, and long may I wave!"

My cousin Flagg! It was no wonder that I did not recognize him.

When the Flagg family, consisting of father and son, removed to the South, George was ten years old and I was thirteen. It was twenty years since he and I had passed a few weeks together on Grandfather Wesley's farm in New Jersey. Our intimacy began and ended there, for it had not ripened into letters; perhaps because we were too young when we parted. Later I had had a hundred intermittent impulses to write to him, but did not. Meanwhile separation and *silence* had clothed him in my mind with something

of the mistiness of a half-remembered dream. Yet the instant Washington Flagg mentioned his name, the boyish features began rapidly to define themselves behind the maturer mask, until he stood before me in the crude form in which my memory had slyly embalmed him.

Now my sense of kinship is particularly strong, for reasons which I shall presently touch upon, and I straightway grasped my cousin's hand with a warmth that would have seemed exaggerated to a bystander, if there had been a bystander; but it was early in the day, and the avenue had not yet awakened to life. As this bitter world goes, a sleek, prosperous, well-dressed man does not usually throw much heartiness into his manner when he is accosted on the street by so unpromising and dismal an object as my cousin Washington Flagg was that morning. Not at all in the way of sounding the trumpet of my own geniality, but simply as the statement of a fact, I will say that I threw a great deal of heartiness into my greeting. This man to me meant Family.

I stood curiously alone in the world. My father died before I was born, and my mother shortly afterwards. I had neither brother nor sister. Indeed, I never had any near relatives except a grandfather until my sons came along. Mrs. Wesley, when I married her, was not merely an only child, but an orphan. Fate denied me even a mother-in-law. I had one uncle and one cousin. The former I do not remember ever to have seen, and my association with the latter, as has been stated, was of a most limited order. Perhaps I should have had less sentiment about family ties if I had had more of them. As it was, Washington Flagg occupied the position of sole kinsman, always excepting the little Wesleys, and I *was as glad to see him that May morning in his pov-*

erty as if he had come to me loaded with the title-deeds of those vast estates which our ancestors (I wonder that I was allowed any ancestors: why was n't I created at once out of some stray scrap of protoplasm?) were supposed to have held in the colonial period. As I gazed upon Washington Flagg I thrilled with the sense that I was gazing upon the materialization in a concrete form of all the ghostly brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces which I had never had.

"Dear old boy!" I exclaimed, in my turn, holding on to his hand as if I were afraid I was going to lose him again for another twenty years. "Bless my stars! where did you come from?"

"From Dixie's Land," he said, with a laugh. "'Way down in Dixie."

In a few words, and with a picturesqueness of phrase in which I noted a rich Southern flavor, he explained the phenomenon of his presence in New York. After Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, my cousin had managed to reach Washington, where he was fortunate enough to get a free pass to Baltimore. He had nearly starved to death in making his way out of Virginia. To quote his words, "The wind that is supposed to be tempered expressly for shorn lambs was not blowing very heavily about that time." At Baltimore he fell in with a former Mobile acquaintance, from whom he borrowed a sum sufficient to pay the fare to New York — a humiliating necessity, as my cousin remarked, for a man who had been a colonel in Stonewall Jackson's brigade. Flagg had reached the city before daybreak, and had wandered for hours along the water-front, waiting for some place to open, in order that he might look up my address in the Directory, if I were still in the *land of the living*. He had had what he described as

an antediluvian sandwich the previous day at two o'clock, since which banquet no food had passed his lips.

"And I'll be hanged," he said, "if the first shop that took down its shutters wasn't a restaurant, with a cursed rib of roast beef, flanked with celery, and a ham in curl-papers staring at me through the window-pane. A little tin sign, with 'Meals at All Hours' painted on it — what did they want to go and do that for? — knocked the breath clean out of me. I gave one look, and ploughed up the street, for if I had stayed fifteen seconds longer in front of that plate-glass, I reckon I would have burst it in. Well, I put distance between me and temptation, and by and by I came to a newspaper office, where I cornered a Directory. I was on the way to your house when we collided; and now, Tom Wesley, for heaven's sake introduce me to something to eat. There is no false pride about me; I'd shake hands with a bone."

The moisture was ready to gather in my eyes, and for a second or two I was unable to manage my voice. Here was my only kinsman on the verge of collapse — one miserable sandwich, like a thin plank, between him and destruction. My own plenteous though hasty morning meal turned into reproachful lead within me.

"Dear old boy!" I cried again. "Come along! I can see that you are nearly famished."

"I've a right smart appetite, Thomas, there's no mistake about that. If appetite were assets, I could invite a whole regiment to rations."

I had thrust my hand under his arm, and was dragging him towards a small oyster shop, whose red balloon in a side street had caught my eye, when I suddenly remembered that it was imperative on me to be *at the office at eight o'clock that morning, in order*.

to prepare certain papers wanted by the president of the board, previous to a meeting of the directors. (I was at that time under-secretary of the Savonarola Fire Insurance Company.) The recollection of the business which had caused me to be on foot at this unusual hour brought me to a dead halt. I dropped my cousin's arm, and stood looking at him helplessly. It seemed so inhospitable, not to say cold-blooded, to send him off to get his breakfast alone. Flagg misinterpreted my embarrassment.

"Of course," he said, with a touch of dignity which pierced me through the bosom, "I do not wish to be taken to any place where I would disgrace you. I know how impossible I am. Yet this suit of clothes cost me twelve hundred dollars in Confederate scrip. These boots are not much to look at, but they were made by a scion of one of the first families of the South; I paid him two hundred dollars for them, and he was right glad to get it. To such miserable straits have Southern gentlemen been reduced by the vandals of the North. Perhaps you don't like the Confederate gray?"

"Bother your boots and your clothes!" I cried. "Nobody will notice them here." (Which was true enough, for in those days the land was strewed with shreds and patches of the war. The drivers and conductors of street cars wore overcoats made out of shoddy army blankets, and the dust-men went about in cast-off infantry caps.) "What troubles me is that I can't wait to start you on your breakfast."

"I reckon I don't need much starting."

I explained the situation to him, and suggested that instead of going to the restaurant, he should go directly to my house, and be served by Mrs. Wesley, to whom I would write a line on a leaf of my memorandum-book. I did not suggest this step in the first in-

stance because the little oyster saloon, close at hand, had seemed to offer the shortest cut to my cousin's relief.

"So you 're married?" said he.

"Yes — and you?"

"I have n't taken any matrimony in mine."

"I've been married six years, and have two boys."

"No! How far is your house?" he inquired. "Will I have to take a caar?"

"A 'caar'? Ah, yes — that is to say, no. A car is n't worth while. You see that bakery two blocks from here, at the right? That's on the corner of Clinton Place. You turn down there. You'll notice in looking over what I've written to Mrs. Wesley that she is to furnish you with some clothes, such as are worn by — by vandals of the North in comfortable circumstances."

"Tom Wesley, you are as good as a straight flush. If you ever come down South, when this cruel war is over, our people will treat you like one of the crowned heads — only a devilish sight better, for the crowned heads rather went back on us. If England had recognized the Southern Confederacy —"

"Never mind that; your tenderloin steak is cooling."

"Don't mention it! I go. But I say, Tom — Mrs. Wesley? Really, I am hardly presentable. Are there other ladies around?"

"There's no one but Mrs. Wesley."

"Do you think I can count on her being glad to see me at such short notice?"

"She will be a sister to you," I said warmly.

"Well, I reckon that you two are a pair of trumps. *Au revoir!* Be good to yourself."

With this, my cousin strode off, tucking my note to Mrs. Wesley inside the leather belt buckled tightly

around his waist. I lingered a moment on the curbstone, and looked after him with a sensation of mingled pride, amusement, and curiosity. That was my Family; there it was, in that broad back and those not ungraceful legs, striding up Sixth Avenue, with its noble intellect intent on thoughts of breakfast. I was thankful that it had not been written in the book of fate that this limb of the closely pruned Wesley tree should be lopped off by the sword of war. But as Washington Flagg turned into Clinton Place, I had a misgiving. It was hardly to be expected that a person of his temperament, fresh from a four years' desperate struggle and a disastrous defeat, would refrain from expressing his views on the subject. That those views would be somewhat lurid, I was convinced by the phrases which he had dropped here and there in the course of our conversation. He was, to all intents and purposes, a Southerner. He had been a colonel in Stonewall Jackson's brigade. And Mrs. Wesley was such an uncompromising patriot! It was in the blood. Her great-grandfather, on the mother's side, had frozen to death at Valley Forge in the winter of 1778, and her grandfather, on the paternal side, had had his head taken off by a round-shot from his Majesty's sloop of war Porpoise in 1812. I believe that Mrs. Wesley would have applied for a divorce from me if I had not served a year in the army at the beginning of the war.

I began bitterly to regret that I had been obliged to present my cousin to her so abruptly. I wished it had occurred to me to give him a word or two of caution, or that I had had sense enough to adhere to my first plan of letting him feed himself at the little oyster establishment round the corner. But wishes and regrets could not now mend the matter; so I hailed an *approaching* horse-car, and comforted myself on the

rear platform with the reflection that perhaps the colonel would not wave the palmetto leaf too vigorously, if he waved it at all, in the face of Mrs. Wesley.

II

The awkwardness of the situation disturbed me more or less during the forenoon; but fortunately it was a half-holiday, and I was able to leave the office shortly after one o'clock.

I do not know how I came to work myself into such a state of mind on the way up town, but as I stepped from the horse-car and turned into Clinton Place I had a strong apprehension that I should find some unpleasant change in the facial aspect of the little red brick building I occupied — a scowl, for instance, on the brown-stone eyebrow over the front door. I actually had a feeling of relief when I saw that the façade presented its usual unaggressive appearance.

As I entered the hall, Mrs. Wesley, who had heard my pass-key grating in the lock, was coming downstairs.

"Is my cousin here, Clara?" I asked, in the act of reaching up to hang my hat on the rack.

"No," said Mrs. Wesley. There was a tone in that monosyllable that struck me.

"But he has been here?"

"He has been here," replied Mrs. Wesley. "Maybe you noticed the bell-knob hanging out one or two inches. Is Mr. Flagg in the habit of stretching the bell-wire of the houses he visits, when the door is not opened in a moment? Has he escaped from somewhere?"

"Escaped from somewhere!" I echoed.

"I only asked; he behaved so strangely."

"Good heavens, Clara! what has the man done? I hope that nothing unpleasant has happened. Flagg

is my only surviving relative — I may say *our* only surviving relative — and I should be pained to have any misunderstanding. I want you to like him.”

“There was a slight misunderstanding at first,” said Clara, and a smile flitted across her face, softening the features which had worn an air of unusual seriousness and preoccupation. “But it is all right now, dear. He has eaten everything in the house, the bit of spring lamb I saved expressly for you; and has gone down town ‘on a raid,’ as he called it, in your second-best suit — the checked tweed. I did all I could for him.”

“My dear, something has ruffled you. What is it?”

“Wesley,” said my wife slowly, and in a perplexed way, “I have had so few relatives that perhaps I don’t know what to do with them, or what to say to them.”

“You always say and do what is just right.”

“I began unfortunately with Mr. Flagg, then. Mary was washing the dishes when he rang, and I went to the door. If he *is* our cousin, I must say that he cut a remarkable figure on the doorstep.”

“I can imagine it, my dear, coming upon you so unexpectedly. There *were* peculiarities in his costume.”

“For an instant,” Clara went on, “I took him for the ashman, though the ashman always goes to the area door, and never comes on Tuesdays; and then, before the creature had a chance to speak, I said, ‘We don’t want any,’ supposing he had something to sell. Instead of going away quietly, as I expected him to do, the man made a motion to come in, and I slammed the door on him.”

“Dear! dear!”

“What else could I do, all alone in the hall? How *was I to know* that he was one of the family?”

"What happened next?"

"Well, I saw that I had shut the lapel of his coat in the door-jamb, and that the man could n't go away if he wanted to ever so much. Was n't it dreadful? Of course I did n't dare to open the door, and there he was! He began pounding on the panels and ringing the bell in a manner to curdle one's blood. He rang the bell at least a hundred times in succession. I stood there with my hand on the bolt, not daring to move or breathe. I called to Mary to put on her things, steal out the lower way, and bring the police. Suddenly everything was still outside, and presently I saw a piece of paper slowly slipping in over the threshold, oh, so slyly! I felt my hands and feet grow cold. I felt that the man himself was about to follow that narrow strip of paper; that he was bound to get in that way, or through the keyhole, or somehow. Then I recognized your handwriting. My first thought was that you had been killed in some horrible accident —"

"And had dropped you a line?"

"I did n't reason about it, Wesley; I was paralyzed. I picked up the paper, and read it, and opened the door, and Mr. Flagg rushed in as if he had been shot out of something. 'Don't want any?' he shouted. 'But I do! I want some breakfast!' You should have heard him."

"He stated a fact, at any rate. Of course he might have stated it less vivaciously." I was beginning to be amused.

"After that he was quieter, and tried to make himself agreeable, and we laughed a little together over my mistake — that is, *he* laughed. Of course I got breakfast for him — and such a breakfast!"

"He had been without anything to eat since yesterday."

"I should have imagined," said Clara, "that he had eaten nothing since the war broke out."

"Did he say anything in particular about himself?" I asked, with a recurrent touch of anxiety.

"He wasn't particular what he said about himself. Without in the least seeing the horror of it, he positively boasted of having been in the rebel army."

"Yes — a colonel."

"That makes it all the worse," replied Clara.

"But they had to have colonels, you know."

"Is Mr. Flagg a Virginian, or a Mississippian, or a Georgian?"

"No, my dear; he was born in the State of Maine; but he has lived so long in the South that he's quite one of them for the present. We must make allowances for him, Clara. Did he say anything else?"

"Oh, yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said he'd come back to supper."

It was clear that Clara was not favorably impressed by my cousin, and, indeed, the circumstances attending his advent were not happy. It was likewise clear that I had him on my hands, temporarily at least. I almost reproach myself even now for saying "on my hands," in connection with my own flesh and blood. The responsibility did not so define itself at the time. It took the form of a novel and pleasing duty. Here was my only kinsman, in a strange city, without friends, money, or hopeful outlook. My course lay before me as straight as a turnpike. I had a great deal of family pride, even if I did not have any family to speak of, and I was resolved that what little I had should not perish for want of proper sustenance.

Shortly before six o'clock Washington Flagg again *presented himself* at our doorstep, and obtained ad-

mission to the house with fewer difficulties than he had encountered earlier in the day.

I do not think I ever saw a man in destitute circumstances so entirely cheerful as my cousin was. Neither the immediate past, which must have been full of hardships, nor the immediate future, which was not lavish of its promises, seemed to give him any but a momentary and impersonal concern. At the supper table he talked much and well, exceedingly well, I thought, except when he touched on the war, which he was continually doing, and then I was on tenter-hooks. His point of view was so opposed to ours as to threaten in several instances to bring on an engagement all along the line. This calamity was averted by my passing something to him at the critical moment. Now I checked his advance by a slice of cold tongue, and now I turned his flank with another cup of tea; but I questioned my ability to preserve peace throughout the evening. Before the meal was at an end there had crept into Clara's manner a polite calmness which I never like to see. What was I going to do with these two after supper, when my cousin Flagg, with his mind undistracted by relays of cream toast, could give his entire attention to the Lost Cause?

As we were pushing the chairs back from the table, I was inspired with the idea of taking our guest off to a café concert over in the Bowery — a *volksgarten* very popular in those days. While my whispered suggestion was meeting Clara's cordial approval, our friend Bleeker dropped in. So the colonel and Bleeker and I passed the evening with "lager-beer and Meyer-beer," as my lively kinsman put it; after which he spent the night on the sofa in our sitting-room, for we had no spare chamber to place at his disposal.

"I shall be very snug here," he said, smiling down

my apologies. "I'm a 'possum for adapting myself to any odd hollow."

The next morning my cousin was early astir, possibly not having found that narrow springless lounge all a 'possum could wish, and joined us in discussing a plan which I had proposed overnight to Mrs. Wesley, namely, that he should hire an apartment in a quiet street near by, and take his meals — that was to say, his dinner — with us, until he could make such arrangements as would allow him to live more conveniently. To return South, where all the lines of his previous business connections were presumably broken, was at present out of the question.

"The war has ruined our people," said the colonel. "I will have to put up for a while with a place in a bank or an insurance office, or something in that small way. The world owes me a living, North or South."

His remark nettled me a little, though he was, of course, unaware of my relations with the Savonarola Fire Insurance Company, and had meant no slight.

"I don't quite see that," I observed.

"Don't see what?"

"How the world contrived to get so deeply into your debt — how all the points of the compass managed it."

"Thomas, I did n't ask to be born, did I?"

"Probably not."

"But I was born, was n't I?"

"To all appearances."

"Well, then!"

"But you cannot hold the world in general responsible for your birth. The responsibility narrows itself down to your parents."

"Then I am euchred. By one of those laws of *nature which make this globe a sweet spot to live on,*

they were taken from me just when I needed them most — my mother in my infancy, and my father in my childhood."

"But your father left you something?"

"The old gentleman left me nothing, and I've been steadily increasing the legacy ever since."

"What did you do before the war?" inquired Clara sympathetically. His mention of his early losses had touched her.

"Oh, a number of things. I read law for a while. At one time I was interested in a large concern for the manufacture of patent metallic burial cases; but nobody seemed to die that year. Good health raged like an epidemic all over the South. Latterly I dabbled a little in stocks — and stocks dabbled in me."

"You were not successful, then?" I said.

"I was at first, but when the war fever broke out and the Southern heart was fired, everything that did n't go down went up."

"And you could n't meet your obligations?"

"That was n't the trouble — I could n't get away from them," replied the colonel, with a winsome smile. "I met them at every corner."

The man had a fashion of turning his very misfortunes into pleasantries. Surely prosperity would be wasted on a person so gifted with optimism. I felt it to be kind and proper, however, to express the hope that he had reached the end of his adversity, and to assure him that I would do anything I could in the world to help him.

"Tom Wesley, I believe you would."

Before the close of that day Mrs. Wesley, who is a lady that does not allow any species of vegetation to accumulate under her feet, had secured a furnished room for our kinsman in a street branching off from Clinton Place, and at a moderate additional expense

contracted to have him served with breakfasts on the premises. Previous to this I had dined down town, returning home in the evening to a rather heavy tea, which was really my wife's dinner — Sheridan and Ulysses (such were the heroic names under which the two little Wesleys were staggering) had their principal meal at midday. It was, of course, not desirable that the colonel should share this meal with them and Mrs. Wesley in my absence. So we decided to have a six o'clock dinner; a temporary disarrangement of our domestic machinery, for my cousin Flagg would doubtless find some acceptable employment before long, and leave the household free to slip back into its regular grooves.

An outline of the physical aspects of the exotic kinsman who had so unexpectedly added himself to the figures at our happy fireside seems not out of place here. The portrait, being the result of many sittings, does not in some points convey the exact impression he made upon us in the earlier moments of our intimacy; but that is not important.

Though Washington Flagg had first opened his eyes on the banks of the Penobscot, he appeared to have been planned by nature to adorn the banks of the Rappahannock. There was nothing of the New-Englander about him. The sallowness of his complexion and the blackness of his straight hair, which he wore long, were those of the typical Southerner. He was of medium height and loosely built, with a kind of elastic grace in his disjointedness. When he smiled he was positively handsome; in repose his features were nearly plain, the lips too indecisive, and the eyes lacking in lustre. A sparse tuft of beard at his chin — he was otherwise smoothly shaven — lengthened the face. There was, when he willed it, *something* very ingratiating in his manner — even

Clara admitted that—a courteous and unconventional sort of ease. In all these surface characteristics he was a geographical anomaly. In the cast of his mind he was more Southern than the South, as a Northern convert is apt to be. Even his speech, like the dyer's arm, had taken tints from his environment. One might say that his pronunciation had literally been colored by his long association with the colored race. He invariably said *flo'* for floor, and *djew* for dew; but I do not anywhere attempt a phonetic reproduction of his dialect; in its finer qualities it was too elusive to be snared in a network of letters. In spite of his displacements, for my cousin had lived all over the South in his boyhood, he had contrived to pick up a very decent education. As to his other attributes, he shall be left to reveal them himself.

III

Mrs. Wesley kindly assumed the charge of establishing Washington Flagg in his headquarters, as he termed the snug hall bedroom in Macdougall Street. There were numberless details to be looked to. His wardrobe, among the rest, needed replenishing down to the most unconsidered button, for Flagg had dropped into our little world with as few impedimenta as if he had been a newly born infant. Though my condition, like that desired by Agur, the son of Jakeh, was one of neither poverty nor riches, greenbacks in those days were greenbacks. I mention the fact in order to say that my satisfaction in coming to the rescue of my kinsman would have been greatly lessened if it had involved no self-denial whatever.

The day following his installation I was partly annoyed, partly amused, to find that Flagg had purchased a rather expensive meerschaum pipe and a pound or two of Latakia tobacco.

"I cannot afford to smoke cigars," he explained. "I must economize until I get on my feet."

Perhaps it would have been wiser if I had personally attended to his expenditures, minor as well as major, but it did not seem practicable to leave him without a cent in his pocket. His pilgrimage down town that forenoon had apparently had no purpose beyond this purchase, though on the previous evening I had directed his notice to two or three commercial advertisements which impressed me as worth looking into. I hesitated to ask him if he had looked into them. A collateral feeling of delicacy prevented me from breathing a word to Clara about the pipe.

Our reconstructed household, with its unreconstructed member, now moved forward on the lines laid down. Punctually at a quarter to six P. M. my cousin appeared at the front door, hung his hat on the rack, and passed into the sitting-room, sometimes humming in the hall a bar or two of "The Bonny Blue Flag that bears a Single Star," to the infinite distaste of Mrs. Wesley, who was usually at that moment giving the finishing touches to the dinner table. After dinner, during which I was in a state of unrelaxed anxiety lest the colonel should get himself on too delicate ground, I took him into my small snugery at the foot of the hall, where coffee was served to us, Mrs. Wesley being left to her own devices.

For several days everything went smoothly, beyond my hope. I found it so easy, when desirable, to switch the colonel on to one of my carefully contrived side tracks that I began to be proud of my skill and to enjoy the exercise of it. But one evening, just as we were in the middle of the dessert, he suddenly broke out with, "We were conquered by mere brute force, you know!"

"*That is very true,*" I replied. "*It is brute force*

that tells in war. Was n't it Napoleon who said that he had remarked that God was generally on the side which had the heaviest artillery?"

"The North had that, fast enough, and crushed a free people with it."

"A free people with four millions of slaves?" observed Mrs. Wesley quietly.

"Slavery was a patriarchal institution, my dear lady. But I reckon it is exploded now. The Emancipation Proclamation was a dastardly war measure."

"It did something more and better than free the blacks," said Mrs. Wesley; "it freed the whites. Dear me!" she added, glancing at Sheridan and Ulysses, who, in a brief reprieve from bed, were over in one corner of the room dissecting a small wooden camel, "I cannot be thankful enough that the children are too young to understand such sentiments."

The colonel, to my great relief, remained silent; but as soon as Clara had closed the dining-room door behind her, he said, "Tom Wesley, I reckon your wife does n't wholly like me."

"She likes you immensely," I cried, inwardly begging to be forgiven. "But she is a firm believer in the justice of the Northern cause."

"Maybe she lost a brother, or something."

"No; she never had a brother. If she had had one, he would have been killed in the first battle of the war. She sent me to the front to be killed, and I went willingly; but I was n't good enough; the enemy wouldn't have me at any price after a year's trial. Mrs. Wesley feels very strongly on this subject, and I wish you would try, like a good fellow, not to bring the question up at dinner-time. I am squarely opposed to your views myself, but I don't mind what you say as she does. So talk to me as much as you want to, *but don't talk in Clara's presence. When persons dis-*

agree as you two do, argument is useless. Besides, the whole thing has been settled on the battle-field, and it is n't worth while to fight it all over again on a table-cloth."

"I suppose it is n't," he assented good-naturedly. "But you people up at the North here don't suspicion what we have been through. You caught only the edge of the hurricane. The most of you, I take it, were n't in it at all."

"Our dearest were in it."

"Well, we got whipped, Wesley, I acknowledge it; but we deserved to win, if ever bravery deserved it."

"The South was brave, nobody contests that; but 't is not enough to be brave' —

'The angry valor dashed
On the awful shield of God,'

as one of our poets says."

"Blast one of your poets! Our people were right, too."

"Come, now, Flagg, when you talk about your people, you ought to mean Northerners, for you were born in the North."

"That was just the kind of luck that has followed me all my life. My body belongs to Bangor, Maine, and my soul to Charleston, South Carolina."

"You've got a problem there that ought to bother you."

"It does," said the colonel, with a laugh.

"Meanwhile, my dear boy, don't distress Mrs. Wesley with it. She is ready to be very fond of you, if you will let her. It would be altogether sad and shameful if a family so contracted as ours could n't get along without internal dissensions."

My cousin instantly professed the greatest regard for Mrs. Wesley, and declared that both of us were good

enough to be Southerners. He promised that in future he would take all the care he could not to run against her prejudices, which merely grew out of her confused conception of State rights and the right of self-government. Women never understood anything about political economy and government, anyhow.

Having accomplished thus much with the colonel, I turned my attention, on his departure, to smoothing Clara. I reminded her that nearly everybody North and South had kinsmen or friends in both armies. To be sure, it was unfortunate that we, having only one kinsman, should have had him on the wrong side. That was better than having no kinsman at all. (Clara was inclined to demur at this.) It had not been practicable for him to divide himself; if it had been, he would probably have done it, and the two halves would doubtless have arrayed themselves against each other. They would, in a manner, have been bound to do so. However, the war was over, we were victorious, and could afford to be magnanimous.

"But he does n't seem to have discovered that the war is over," returned Clara. "He 'still waves.'"

"It is likely that certain obstinate persons on both sides of Mason and Dixon's line will be a long time making the discovery. Some will never make it — so much the worse for them and the country."

Mrs. Wesley meditated and said nothing, but I saw that so far as she and the colonel were concerned the war was not over.

IV

This slight breeze cleared the atmosphere for the time being. My cousin Flagg took pains to avoid all but the most indirect allusions to the war, except when we were alone, and in several small ways endeavored — *with not too dazzling success* — to be agreeable to

Clara. The transparency of the effort was perhaps the partial cause of its failure. And then, too, the nature of his little attentions was not always carefully considered on his part. For example, Mrs. Wesley could hardly be expected to lend herself with any grace at all to the proposal he made one sultry June evening to "knock her up" a mint-julep, "the most refreshing beverage on earth, madam, in hot weather, I can assure you." Judge Ashburton Todhunter, of Fauquier County, had taught him to prepare this pungent elixir from a private receipt for which the judge had once refused the sum of fifty dollars, offered to him by Colonel Stanley Bluegrass, of Chattanooga, and this was at a moment, too, when the judge had been losing very heavily at draw poker.

"All quiet along the Potomac," whispered the colonel, with a momentary pride in the pacific relations he had established between himself and Mrs. Wesley.

As the mint and one or two other necessary ingredients were lacking to our family stores, the idea of julep was dismissed as a vain dream, and its place supplied by iced Congress water, a liquid which my cousin characterized, in a hasty aside to me, as being a drink fit only for imbecile infants of a tender age.

Washington Flagg's frequent and familiar mention of governors, judges, colonels, and majors clearly indicated that he had moved in aristocratic latitudes in the South, and threw light on his disinclination to consider any of the humbler employments which might have been open to him. He had so far conceded to the exigency of the case as to inquire if there were a possible chance for him in the Savonarola Fire Insurance Company. He had learned of my secretaryship. There was no vacancy in the office, and if there had been, I would have taken no steps to fill it with my *cousin*. He knew nothing of the business. Besides,

however deeply I had his interests at heart, I should have hesitated to risk my own situation by becoming sponsor for so unmanageable an element as he appeared to be.

At odd times in my snugger after dinner Flagg glanced over the "wants" columns of the evening journal, but never found anything he wanted. He found many amusing advertisements that served him as pegs on which to hang witty comment, but nothing to be taken seriously. I ventured to suggest that he should advertise. He received the idea with little warmth.

"No, my dear boy, I can't join the long procession of scullions, cooks, butlers, valets, and bottle-washers which seem to make up so large a part of your population. I could n't keep step with them. It is altogether impossible for me to conduct myself in this matter like a menial-of-all-work out of place. 'Wanted, a situation, by a respectable young person of temperate habits; understands the care of horses; is willing to go into the country and milk the cow with the crumpled horn.' No; many thanks."

"State your own requirements, Flagg. I did n't propose that you should offer yourself as coachman."

"It would amount to the same thing, Wesley. I should at once be relegated to his level. Some large opportunity is dead sure to present itself to me if I wait. I believe the office should seek the man."

"I have noticed that a man has to meet his opportunities more than half way, or he does n't get acquainted with them. Mohammed was obliged to go to the mountain, after waiting for the mountain to come to him."

"Mohammed's mistake was that he did n't wait long enough. He was too impatient. But don't you fret. I have come to Yankeedom to make my fortune. The

despot's heel is on your shore, and it means to remain there until he hears of something greatly to his advantage."

A few days following this conversation, Mr. Nelson, of Files and Nelson, wholesale grocers on Front Street, mentioned to me casually that he was looking for a shipping-clerk. Before the war the firm had done an extensive Southern trade, which they purposed to build up again now that the ports of the South were thrown open. The place in question involved a great deal of outdoor work — the loading and unloading of spicy cargoes, a life among the piers — all which seemed to me just suited to my cousin's woodland nature. I could not picture him nailed to a desk in a counting-room. The salary was not bewildering, but the sum was to be elastic, if ability were shown. Here was an excellent chance, a stepping-stone, at all events; perhaps the large opportunity itself, artfully disguised as fifteen dollars a week. I spoke of Flagg to Mr. Nelson, and arranged a meeting between them for the next day.

I said nothing of the matter at the dinner table that evening; but an encouraging thing always makes a lantern of me, and Clara saw the light in my face. As soon as dinner was over I drew my cousin into the little side room, and laid the affair before him.

"And I have made an appointment for you to meet Mr. Nelson to-morrow at one o'clock," I said, in conclusion.

"My dear Wesley" — he had listened to me in silence, and now spoke without enthusiasm — "I don't know what you were thinking of to do anything of the sort. I will not keep the appointment with that person. The only possible intercourse I could have with *him* would be to order groceries at his shop. The idea of a man who has moved in the best society of the

South, who has been engaged in great if unsuccessful enterprises, who has led the picked chivalry of his oppressed land against the Northern hordes — the idea of a gentleman of this kidney meekly simmering down into a factotum to a Yankee dealer in canned goods! No, sir; I reckon I can do better than that."

The lantern went out.

I resolved that moment to let my cousin shape his own destiny — a task which in no way appeared to trouble him. And, indeed, now that I look back to it, why should he have troubled himself? He had a comfortable if not luxurious apartment in Macdougall Street; a daily dinner that asked only to be eaten; a wardrobe that was replenished when it needed replenishing; a weekly allowance that made up for its modesty by its punctuality. If ever a man was in a position patiently to await the obsequious approach of large opportunities that man was Washington Flagg. He was not insensible to the fact. He passed his time serenely. He walked the streets — Flagg was a great walker — sometimes wandering for hours in the Central Park. His Southern life, passed partly among plantations, had given him a relish for trees and rocks and waters. He was also a hungry reader of novels. When he had devoured our slender store of fiction, which was soon done, he took books from a small circulating library on Sixth Avenue. That he gave no thought whatever to the future was clear. He simply drifted down the gentle stream of the present. Sufficient to the day was the sunshine thereof.

In spite of his unforgivable inertia, and the egotism that enveloped him like an atmosphere, there was a charm to the man that put my impatience to sleep. I tried to think that this indifference and sunny idleness were perhaps the natural reaction of that larger

life of emotion and activity from which he had just emerged. I reflected a great deal on that life, and, though I lamented the fact that he had drawn his sword on the wrong side, there was, down deep in my heart, an involuntary sympathetic throb for the valor that had not availed. I suppose the inexplicable ties of kinship had something to do with all this.

Washington Flagg had now been with us five weeks. He usually lingered awhile after dinner; sometimes spent the entire evening with the family, or, rather, with me, for Mrs. Wesley preferred the sitting-room to my den when I had company. Besides, there were Sheridan and Ulysses to be looked to. Toward the close of the sixth week I noticed that Flagg had fallen into a way of leaving immediately after dinner. He had also fallen into another way not so open to pleasant criticism.

By degrees — by degrees so subtle as almost to escape measurement — he had glided back to the forbidden and dangerous ground of the war. At first it was an intangible reference to something that occurred on such and such a date, the date in question being that of some sanguinary battle; then a swift sarcasm, veiled and softly shod; then a sarcasm that dropped its veil for an instant, and showed its sharp features. At last his thought wore no disguise. Possibly the man could not help it; possibly there was something in the atmosphere of the house that impelled him to say things which he would have been unlikely to say elsewhere. Whatever was the explanation, my cousin Flagg began to make himself disagreeable again at meal-times.

He had never much regarded my disapproval, and now his early ill-defined fear of Mrs. Wesley was *evaporated*. He no longer hesitated to indulge in his *war reminiscences*, which necessarily brought his per-

sonal exploits under a calcium-light. These exploits usually emphasized his intimacy with some of the more dashing Southern leaders, such as Stonewall Jackson and Jeb Stuart and Mosby. We found ourselves practically conscripted in the Confederate army. We were taken on long midnight rides through the passes of the Cumberland Mountains and hurled on some Federal outpost; we were made — a mere handful as we were — to assault and carry most formidable earthworks; we crossed dangerous fords, and bivouacked under boughs hung with weird gonfalons of gray moss, slit here and there by the edge of a star. Many a time we crawled stealthily through tangled vines and shrubs to the skirt of a wood, and across a fallen log sighted the Yankee picket whose bayonet point glimmered now and then far off in the moonlight. We spent a great many hours around the camp-fire counting our metaphorical scalps.

One evening the colonel was especially exasperating with anecdotes of Stonewall Jackson, and details of what he said to the general and what the general said to him.

"Stonewall Jackson often used to say to me, 'George' — he always called me George, in just that off-hand way — 'George, when we get to New York, you shall have quarters in the Astor House, and pasture your mare Spitfire in the park.'"

"That was very thoughtful of Stonewall Jackson," remarked Mrs. Wesley, with the faintest little whiteness gathering at the lips. "I am sorry that your late friend did not accompany you to the city, and personally superintend your settlement here. He would have been able to surround you with so many more comforts than you have in Macdougall Street."

The colonel smiled upon Clara, and made a deprecating gesture with his left hand. Nothing seemed to

pierce his ironclad composure. A moment afterward he returned to the theme, and recited some verses called "Stonewall Jackson's Way." He recited them very well. One stanza lingers in my memory:—

"We see him now—the old slouched hat
Cocked o'er his brow askew,
The shrewd, dry smile, the speech so pat,
So calm, so blunt, so true.
The Blue-light Elder knows 'em well.
Says he: 'That's Banks; he's fond of shell.
Lord save his soul! we'll give him—' Well,
That's Stonewall Jackson's way."

"His ways must have been far from agreeable," observed my wife, "if that is a sample of them."

After the colonel had taken himself off, Mrs. Wesley, sinking wearily upon the sofa, said, "I think I am getting rather tired of Stonewall Jackson."

"We both are, my dear; and some of our corps commanders used to find him rather tiresome now and then. He was really a great soldier, Clara; perhaps the greatest on the other side."

"I suppose he was; but Flagg comes next—according to his own report. Why, Tom, if your cousin had been in all the battles he says he has, the man would have been killed ten times over. He'd have had at least an arm or a leg shot off."

That Washington Flagg had all his limbs on was actually becoming a grievance to Mrs. Wesley.

The situation filled me with anxiety. Between my cousin's deplorable attitude and my wife's justifiable irritation, I was extremely perplexed. If I had had a dozen cousins, the solution of the difficulty would have been simple. But to close our door on our only kinsman was an intolerable alternative.

If any word of mine has caused the impression that *Clara was not gentle and sympathetic and altogether*

feminine, I have wronged her. The reserve which strangers mistook for coldness was a shell that melted at the slightest kind touch, her masterful air the merest seeming. But whatever latent antagonism lay in her nature the colonel had the faculty of bringing to the surface. It must be conceded that the circumstances in which she was placed were trying, and Clara was without that strong, perhaps abnormal, sense of relationship which sustained me in the ordeal. Later on, when matters grew more complicated, I could but admire her resignation — if it were not helpless despair. Sometimes, indeed, she was unable to obliterate herself, and not only stood by her guns, but carried the war into the enemy's country. I very frequently found myself between two fires, and was glad to drag what small fragments were left of me from the scene of action. In brief, the little house in Clinton Place was rapidly transforming itself into a ghastly caricature of home.

Up to the present state of affairs the colonel had never once failed to appear at dinner-time. We had become so accustomed to his ring at the prescribed hour, and to hearing him outside in the hall softly humming "The Bonny Blue Flag," or "I wish I was in Dixie's Land" (a wish which he did not wholly monopolize) — we had, I repeat, become so accustomed to these details that one night when he absented himself we experienced a kind of alarm. It was not until the clock struck ten that we gave over expecting him. Then, fearing that possibly he was ill, I put on my hat and stepped round to Macdougall Street. Mr. Flagg had gone out late in the afternoon, and had not returned. No, he had left no word in case any one called. What had happened? I smile to myself now, and I have smiled a great many times, at the remembrance of how worried I was that night as I walked *slowly back to Clinton Place.*

The next evening my cousin explained his absence. He had made the acquaintance of some distinguished literary gentlemen, who had invited him to dine with them at a certain German café, which at an earlier date had been rather famous as the rendezvous of a group of young journalists, wits, and unblossomed poets, known as "The Bohemians." The war had caused sad havoc with these light-hearted Knights of the Long Table, and it was only upon a scattered remnant of the goodly company that the colonel had fallen. How it came about, I do not know. I know that the acquaintance presently flowered into intimacy, and that at frequent intervals after this we had a vacant chair at table. My cousin did not give himself the pains to advise us of his engagements, so these absences were not as pleasant as they would have been if we had not expected him every minute.

Recently, too, our expectation of his coming was tinged with a dread which neither I nor Mrs. Wesley had named to each other. A change was gradually taking place in my cousin. Hitherto his amiability, even when he was most unendurable, had been a part of him. Obviously he was losing that lightness of spirit which we once disliked and now began to regret. He was inclined to be excitable and sullen by turns, and often of late I had been obliged to go to the bottom of my diplomacy in preventing some painful scene. As I have said, neither my wife nor I had spoken definitely of this alteration; but the cause and nature of it could not long be ignored between us.

"How patient you are with him, dear!" said Mrs. Wesley, as I was turning out the gas after one of our grim and grotesque little dinners: the colonel had not dined with us before for a week. "I don't see how you can be so patient with the man."

"Blood is thicker than water, Clara."

"But it is n't thicker than whiskey and water, is it?"

She had said it. The colonel was drinking. It was not a question of that light elixir the precious receipt for which had been confided to him by Judge Ashburton Todhunter, of Fauquier County; it was a question of a heavier and more immediate poison. The fact that Flagg might in some desperate state drop in on us at any moment stared us in the face. That was a very serious contingency, and it was one I could not guard against. I had no false ideas touching my influence over Washington Flagg. I did not dream of attempting to influence him; I was powerless. I could do nothing but wait, and wonder what would happen. There was nothing the man might not be capable of in some insane moment.

In the mean while I was afraid to go out of an evening and leave Clara alone. It was impossible for us to ask a friend to dinner, though, indeed, we had not done that since my cousin dropped down on us. It was no relief that his visits grew rarer and rarer; the apprehension remained. It was no relief when they ceased altogether, for it came to that at last.

A month had elapsed since he had called at the house. I had caught sight of him once on Broadway as I was riding up town in an omnibus. He was standing at the top of the steep flight of steps that led to Herr Pfaff's saloon in the basement. It was probably Flagg's dinner hour. Mrs. Morgan, the landlady in Macdougall Street, a melancholy little soul, was now the only link between me and my kinsman. I had a weekly interview with her. I learned that Mr. Flagg slept late, was seldom in during the day, and usually returned after midnight. A person with this eccentric scheme of life was not likely to be at home at such hours as I might find it convenient to call. Nevertheless, from time to time I knocked at

the unresponsive door of his room. The two notes I had written to him he left unanswered.

All this was very grievous. He had been a trouble to me when I had him, and he was a trouble to me now I had lost him. My trouble had merely changed its color. On what downward way were his footsteps? What was to be the end of it? Sometimes I lay awake at night thinking of him. Of course, if he went to the dogs, he had nobody to blame but himself. I was not responsible for his wrong-going; nevertheless, I could not throw off my anxiety in the matter. That Flagg was leading a wild life in these days was presumable. Indeed, certain rumors to that effect were indirectly blown to me from the caves of Gambrinus. Not that I believe the bohemians demoralized him. He probably demoralized the bohemians. I began to reflect whether fate had not behaved rather handsomely, after all, in not giving me a great many relatives.

If I remember rightly, it was two months since I had laid eyes on my cousin, when, on returning home one evening, I noticed that the front door stood wide open, and had apparently been left to take care of itself. As I mounted the steps, a little annoyed at Mary's carelessness, I heard voices in the hall. Washington Flagg was standing at the foot of the staircase, with his hand on the newel-post, and Mrs. Wesley was half-way up the stairs, as if in the act of descending. I learned later that she had occupied this position for about three quarters of an hour. She was extremely pale and much agitated. Flagg's flushed face and tilted hat told his part of the story. He was not in one of his saturnine moods. He was amiably and, if I may say it, gracefully drunk, and evidently had all his wits about him.

"I've been telling Mrs. Wesley," he began at once, *as if I had been present all the while*, and he was

politely lifting me into the conversation — "I've been telling Mrs. Wesley that I'm a Lost Cause."

"A lost soul," was Mrs. Wesley's amendment from the staircase. "Oh, Tom, I am so glad you have come! I thought you never would! I let him in an hour or two ago, and he has kept me here ever since."

"You were so entertaining," said my cousin, with a courteous sweep of his disengaged hand, and speaking with that correctness of enunciation which sometimes survives everything.

"Flagg," I said, stepping to his side, "you will oblige me by returning to your lodgings."

"You think I'm not all right?"

"I am sure of it."

"And you don't want me here, dear old boy?"

"No, I don't want you here. The time has come for me to be frank with you, Flagg, and I see that your mind is clear enough to enable you to understand what I say."

"I reckon I can follow you, Thomas."

"My stock of romantic nonsense about kinship and family duties, and all that, has given out, and will not be renewed."

"Won't do business any more at the old stand?"

"Exactly so. I have done everything I could to help you, and you have done nothing whatever for yourself. You have not even done yourself the scant justice of treating Clara and me decently. In future you will be obliged to look after your own affairs, financial as well as social. Your best plan now is to go to work. I shall no longer concern myself with your comings and goings, except so far as to prevent you from coming here and disturbing Clara. Have you put that down?"

"Wesley, my boy, I'll pay you for this."

"If you do, it will be the first thing you have paid for since you came North."

My statement, however accurate, was not wholly delicate, and I subsequently regretted it, but when a patient man loses his patience he goes to extremes. Washington Flagg straightened himself for an instant, and then smiled upon me in an amused, patronizing way quite untranslatable.

"Thomas, that was neat, very neat—for you. When I see Judge Ashburton Todhunter I'll tell him about it. It's the sort of mild joke he likes."

"I should be proud to have Judge Ashburton Todhunter's approval of any remark of mine, but in the mean while it would be a greater pleasure to me to have you return at once to Macdougall Street, where, no doubt, Mrs. Morgan is delaying dinner for you."

"Say no more, Wesley. I'll never set foot in your house again, as sure as my name is Flagg—and long may I wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

"He is a kind of Flagg that I don't wish to have wave over *my* home," said Mrs. Wesley, descending the stairs as my cousin with painful care closed the door softly behind him.

So the end was come. It had come with less unpleasantness than I should have predicted. The ties of kindred, too tightly stretched, had snapped; but they had snapped very gently, so to speak.

V

Washington Flagg was as good as his word, which is perhaps not a strong indorsement. He never again set foot in my house. A week afterward I found that he had quitted Macdougall Street.

"He has gone South," said Mrs. Morgan.

"Did he leave no message for me?"

"He did n't leave a message for nobody."

"Did he happen to say to what part of the South he was bound?"

"He said he was going back to Dixie's land, and did n't say no more."

That was all. His departure had been as abrupt and unlooked-for as his arrival. I wondered if he would turn up again at the end of another twenty years, and I wondered how he had paid his traveling expenses to the land of the magnolia and the persimmon. That mystery was solved a few days subsequently when a draft (for so reasonable a sum as not to be worth mentioning to Clara) was presented to me for payment at my office.

Washington Flagg was gone, but his shadow was to linger for a while longer on our household. It was difficult to realize that the weight which had oppressed us had been removed. We were scarcely conscious of how heavy it had been until it was lifted. I was now and then forced to make an effort not to expect the colonel to dinner.

A month or two after his disappearance an incident occurred which brought him back very vividly and in a somewhat sinister shape to our imaginations. Quite late one night there was a sharp ring at the door. Mary having gone to bed, I answered the bell. On the doorstep stood a tall, pale girl, rather shabbily dressed, but with a kind of beauty about her; it seemed to flash from her eyelashes, which I noticed were very heavy. The hall light fell full upon this slight figure, standing there wrapped in an insufficient shawl, against a dense background of whirling snowflakes. She asked if I could give her Colonel Flagg's address. On receiving my reply, the girl swiftly descended the steps, and vanished into the darkness. *There was a tantalizing point of romance and mystery*

to all this. As I slowly closed the front door I felt that perhaps I was closing it on a tragedy — one of those piteous, unwritten tragedies of the great city. I have wondered a thousand times who that girl was and what became of her.

Before the end of the year another incident — this time with a touch of comedy — lighted up the past of my kinsman. Among the traveling agents for the Savonarola Fire Insurance Company was a young man by the name of Brett, Charles Brett, a new employé. His family had been ruined by the war, and he had wandered North, as the son of many a Southern gentleman had been obliged to do, to earn his living. We became friends, and frequently lunched together when his business brought him to the city. Brett had been in the Confederate army, and it occurred to me one day to ask him if he had ever known my cousin the colonel. Brett was acquainted with a George W. Flagg; had known him somewhat intimately, in fact; but it was probably not the same man. We compared notes, and my Flagg was his Flagg.

"But he was n't a colonel," said Brett. "Why, Flagg was n't in the war at all. I don't fancy he heard a gun fired, unless it went off by accident in some training-camp for recruits. He got himself exempt from service in the field by working in the government saltworks. A heap of the boys escaped conscription that way."

In the saltworks! That connected my cousin with the navy rather than with the army!

I would have liked not to believe Brett's statement, but it was so circumstantial and precise as not to be doubted. Brett was far from suspecting how *deeply* his information had cut me. In spite of my *loyalty*, the discovery that my kinsman had not been

a full-blown rebel was vastly humiliating. How that once curiously regarded flower of chivalry had withered! What about those reckless moonlight raids? What had become of Prince Rupert, at the head of his plumed cavaliers, sweeping through the valley of the Shenandoah, and dealing merited destruction to the boys in blue? In view of Brett's startling revelation, my kinsman's personal anecdotes of Stonewall Jackson took on an amusing quality which they had not possessed for us in the original telling.

I was disappointed that Clara's astonishment was much more moderate than mine.

"He was *too* brave, Tom, dear. He always seemed to be overdoing it just a grain, don't you think!"

I did n't think so at the time; I was afraid he was telling the truth. And now, by one of those contradictions inseparable from weak humanity, I regretted that he was not. A hero had tumbled from the family pedestal — a misguided hero, to be sure, but still a hero. My vanity, which in this case was of a complex kind, had received a shock.

I did not recover from it for nearly three months, when I received a second shock of a more serious nature. It came in the shape of a letter, dated at Pensacola, Florida, and written by one Sylvester K. Matthews, advising me that George Flagg had died of the yellow fever in that city in the previous month. I gathered from the letter that the writer had been with my cousin through his illness, and was probably an intimate friend; at all events, the details of the funeral had fallen to the charge of Mr. Matthews, who inclosed the receipted bills with the remark that he had paid them, but supposed that I would prefer to do so, leaving it, in a way, at my option.

The news of my cousin's death grieved me more *than I should have imagined beforehand. He had not*

appreciated my kindness; he had not added to my happiness while I was endeavoring to secure his; he had been flagrantly ungrateful, and in one or two minor matters had deceived me. Yet, after all said and done, he was my cousin, my only cousin — and he was dead. Let us criticise the living, but spare the dead.

I put the memoranda back into the envelope; they consisted of a bill for medical attendance, a board bill, the nurse's account, and an undertaker's bill, with its pathetic and, to me, happily, unfamiliar items. For the rest of the day I was unable to fix my attention on my work, or to compose myself sufficiently to write to Mr. Matthews. I quitted the office that evening an hour earlier than was my habit.

Whether Clara was deeply affected by what had happened, or whether she disapproved of my taking upon myself expenses which, under the peculiar circumstances, might properly be borne by Flagg's intimate friend and comrade, was something I could not determine. She made no comments. If she considered that I had already done all that my duty demanded of me to do for my cousin, she was wise enough not to say so; for she must have seen that I took a different and unalterable view of it. Clara has her own way fifty-nine minutes out of the hour, but the sixtieth minute is mine.

She was plainly not disposed to talk on the subject; but I wanted to talk with some one on the subject; so, when dinner was through, I put the Matthews papers into my pocket and went up to my friend Bleeker's, in Seventeenth Street. Though a little cynical at times, he was a man whose judgment I thought well of.

After reading the letter and glancing over the memoranda, Bleeker turned to me and said, "*You want to know how it strikes me — is that it?*"

"Well — yes."

"The man is dead?"

"Yes."

"And buried?"

"Assuredly."

"And the bills are paid?"

"You see yourself they are receipted."

"Well, then," said Bleeker, "considering all things, I should let well enough alone."

"You mean you would do nothing in the matter?"

"I should 'let the dead past bury its dead,' as Longfellow says." Bleeker was always quoting Longfellow.

"But it is n't the dead past, it's the living present that has attended to the business; and he has sent in his account with all the items. I can't have this Matthews going about the country telling everybody that I allowed him to pay my cousin's funeral expenses."

"Then pay them. You have come to me for advice after making up your mind to follow your own course. That's just the way people do when they really want to be advised. I've done it myself, Wesley — I've done it myself."

The result was, I sent Mr. Matthews a check, after which I impulsively threw those dreadful bills into the office grate. I had no right to do it, for the vouchers really belonged to Mr. Matthews, and might be wanted some day; but they had haunted me like so many ghosts until I destroyed them. I fell asleep that night trying to recollect whether the items included a headstone for my cousin's grave. I could n't for the life of me remember, and it troubled me not a little. There were enough nameless graves in the South, without his being added to the number.

One day, a fortnight later, as Clara and I were finishing dinner, young Brett called at the house. I

had supposed him to be in Omaha. He had, in effect, just come from there and elsewhere on one of his long business tours, and had arrived in the city too late in the afternoon to report himself at the office. He now dropped in merely for a moment, but we persuaded him to remain and share the dessert with us. I purposed to keep him until Clara left us to our cigars. I wished to tell him of my cousin's death, which I did not care to do while she was at the table. We were talking of this and that, when Brett looked up, and said, rather abruptly:—

“By the way, I saw Flagg on the street the other day in Mobile. He was looking well.”

The bit of melon I had in my mouth refused to be swallowed. I fancy that my face was a study. A dead silence followed; and then my wife reached across the table, and pressing my hand, said, very gently, —

“Wesley, you were not brilliant, but you were good.”

All this was longer ago than I care to remember. I heard no more from Mr. Matthews. Last week, oddly enough, while glancing over a file of recent Southern newspapers, I came across the announcement of the death of George W. Flagg. It was yellow fever this time also. If later on I receive any bills in connection with that event, I shall let my friend Bleeker audit them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

What makes Wesley's happiness so keen at the unexpected meeting with his cousin? What attractive traits of disposition does Wesley show? What amuses you in Flagg's *appearance and manner of speaking*? He is not dull nor *commonplace*. Why? Try to conceive the high pitch of

Wesley's enthusiasm and pride as you anticipate the development of the story. What natural mistakes and unlucky events appeal to your sense of humor in the "sisterly" welcome?

Follow the Colonel's bold and high-handed manner in the Wesleys' home. What is the effect of his flattery? His impertinence and teasing? His high-minded dignity and self-glorification? Look for incidents that show other traits of character and disposition. Follow Mrs. Wesley's resentment and indignation. In what way do her doubts forecast catastrophe for the Colonel? Follow Wesley's efforts to justify the Colonel in his own mind and to his wife. What crafty and amusing schemes does he resort to in order to keep peace? What conflicting thoughts and feelings disturb him as he tries to work out plans for the Colonel's welfare?

What events reveal the real character of the Colonel? Why does his last appearance satisfy your imagination as a fitting climax? As the story closes, why are you inclined to laugh at Wesley rather than to pity him?

Technique

Introduction. Note that the introduction serves to tell how the author *came to write the story*. What suggests the *theme*? How is *interest aroused*? Note that the chief character is introduced in *conversation*, with only such description as a hasty glance would give.

Plot. How far does the plot *depend upon situations*? Select several situations and study the skill with which they are used to produce effects. Show how circumstances or personal traits and peculiarities give rise to one situation after another. Can you show that every event points toward a definite climax? Long passages of explanation or description may hinder the progress of the story. Do such passages in this story aid in the understanding of the situations? Why? Regarding the Colonel's last appearance as the *climax*, what remark of his makes further action probable? What facts must be brought to light to complete the *hoax plot*?

Character. Incident and situation are not used here to *develop character*. The characters are developed merely as *moving forces* in producing situations.

AUNT CYNTHY DALLETT

By SARAH ORNE JEWETT

I

"No," said Mrs. Hand, speaking wistfully, — "no, we never were in the habit of keeping Christmas at our house. Mother died when we were all young; she would have been the one to keep up with all new ideas, but father and grandmother were old-fashioned folks, and — well, you know how 't was then, Miss Pendexter: nobody took much notice of the day except to wish you a Merry Christmas."

"They did n't do much to make it merry, certain," answered Miss Pendexter. "Sometimes nowadays I hear folks complainin' o' bein' overtaxed with all the Christmas work they have to do."

"Well, others think that it makes a lovely chance for all that really enjoys givin'; you get an opportunity to speak your kind feelin' right out," answered Mrs. Hand, with a bright smile. "But there! I shall always keep New Year's Day, too; it won't do no hurt to have an extra day kept an' made pleasant. And there's many of the real old folks have got pretty things to remember about New Year's Day."

"Aunt Cynthia Dallett's just one of 'em," said Miss Pendexter. "She's always very reproachful if I don't get up to see her. Last year I missed it, on account of a light fall o' snow that seemed to make the walkin' too bad, an' she sent a neighbor's boy 'way down from the mount'in to see if I was sick. Her lameness confines her to the house altogether *now, an' I have her on my mind a good deal. How*

anybody does get thinkin' of those that lives alone, as they get older! I waked up only last night with a start, thinkin' if Aunt Cynthy's house should get afire or anything, what she would do, 'way up there all alone. I was half dreamin', I s'pose, but I could n't seem to settle down until I got up an' went upstairs to the north garret window to see if I could see any light; but the mountains was all dark an' safe, same 's usual. I remember noticin' last time I was there that her chimney needed pointin', and I spoke to her about it, — the bricks looked poor in some places."

"Can you see the house from your north gable window?" asked Mrs. Hand, a little absently.

"Yes'm; it's a great comfort that I can," answered her companion. "I have often wished we were near enough to have her make me some sort o' signal in case she needed help. I used to plead with her to come down and spend the winters with me, but she told me one day I might as well try to fetch down one o' the old hemlocks, an' I believe 't was true."

"Your aunt Dallett is a very self-contained person," observed Mrs. Hand.

"Oh, very!" exclaimed the elderly niece, with a pleased look. "Aunt Cynthy laughs, an' says she expects the time will come when age 'll compel her to have me move up an' take care of her; and last time I was there she looked up real funny, an' says, 'I do know, Abby; I'm most afeard sometimes that I feel myself beginnin' to look for'ard to it!' 'T was a good deal, comin' from Aunt Cynthy, an' I so esteemed it."

"She ought to have you there now," said Mrs. Hand. "You'd both make a savin' by doin' it; but I don't expect she needs to save as much as some. There! I know just how you both feel. I like to have *my own home* an' do everything just *my way* too."

And the friends laughed, and looked at each other affectionately.

"There was old Mr. Nathan Dunn, — left no debts an' no money when he died," said Mrs. Hand. "'T was over to his niece's last summer. He had a little money in his wallet, an' when the bill for funeral expenses come in there was just exactly enough; some item or other made it come to so many dollars an' eighty-four cents, and, lo an' behold! there was eighty-four cents in a little separate pocket beside the neat fold o' bills, as if the old gentleman had known beforehand. His niece could n't help laughin', to save her; she said the old gentleman died as methodical as he lived. She did n't expect he had any money, an' was prepared to pay for everything herself; she's very well off."

"'T was funny, certain," said Miss Pendexter. "I expect he felt comfortable, knowin' he had that money by him. 'T is a comfort, when all's said and done, 'specially to folks that's gettin' old."

A sad look shadowed her face for an instant, and then she smiled and rose to take leave, looking expectantly at her hostess to see if there were anything more to be said.

"I hope to come out square myself," she said, by way of farewell pleasantry; "but there are times when I feel doubtful."

Mrs. Hand was evidently considering something, and waited a moment or two before she spoke. "Suppose we both walk up to see your aunt Dallett, New Year's Day, if it ain't too windy and the snow keeps off?" she proposed. "I could n't rise the hill if 't was a windy day. We could take a hearty breakfast an' start in good season; I'd rather walk than ride, the road's so rough this time o' year."

"Oh, what a person you are to think o' things! I *did* so dread goin' 'way up there all alone," said Abby

Pendexter. "I'm no hand to go off alone, an' I had it before me, so I really got to dread it. I do so enjoy it after I get there, seein' Aunt Cynthy, an' she's always so much better than I expect to find her."

"Well, we 'll start early," said Mrs. Hand cheerfully; and so they parted. As Miss Pendexter went down the foot-path to the gate, she sent grateful thoughts back to the little sitting-room she had just left.

"How doors are opened!" she exclaimed to herself. "Here I've been so poor an' distressed at beginnin' the year with nothin', as it were, that I could n't think o' even goin' to make poor old Aunt Cynthy a friendly call. I'll manage to make some kind of a little pleasure too, an' somethin' for dear Mis' Hand. 'Use what you've got,' mother always used to say when every sort of an emergency come up, an' I may only have wishes to give, but I'll make 'em good ones!"

II

The first day of the year was clear and bright, as if it were a New Year's pattern of what winter can be at its very best. The two friends were prepared for changes of weather, and met each other well wrapped in their winter cloaks and shawls, with sufficient brown barége veils tied securely over their bonnets. They ignored for some time the plain truth that each carried something under her arm; the shawls were rounded out suspiciously, especially Miss Pendexter's, but each respected the other's air of secrecy. The narrow road was frozen in deep ruts, but a smooth-trodden little foot-path that ran along its edge was very inviting to the wayfarers. Mrs. Hand walked first and Miss Pendexter followed, and they were *talk-
ing busily* nearly all the way, so that they had to stop

for breath now and then at the tops of the little hills. It was not a hard walk ; there were a good many almost level stretches through the woods, in spite of the fact that they should be a very great deal higher when they reached Mrs. Dallett's door.

"I do declare, what a nice day 't is, an' such pretty footin'!" said Mrs. Hand, with satisfaction. "Seems to me as if my feet went o' themselves ; gener'lly I have to toil so when I walk that I can't enjoy nothin' when I get to a place."

"It's partly this beautiful bracin' air," said Abby Pendexter. "Sometimes such nice air comes just before a fall of snow. Don't it seem to make anybody feel young again and to take all your troubles away?"

Mrs. Hand was a comfortable, well-to-do soul, who seldom worried about anything, but something in her companion's tone touched her heart, and she glanced sidewise and saw a pained look in Abby Pendexter's thin face. It was a moment for confidence.

"Why, you speak as if something distressed your mind, Abby," said the elder woman kindly.

"I ain't one that has myself on my mind as a usual thing, but it does seem now as if I was goin' to have it very hard," said Abby. "Well, I've been anxious before."

"Is it anything wrong about your property?" Mrs. Hand ventured to ask.

"Only that I ain't got any," answered Abby, trying to speak gayly. "'T was all I could do to pay my last quarter's rent, twelve dollars. I sold my hens, all but this one that had run away at the time, an' now I'm carryin' her up to Aunt Cynthia, roasted just as nice as I know how."

"I thought you was carrying somethin'," said Mrs. Hand, in her usual tone. "For me, I've got a couple o' my mince pies. I thought the old lady might like

'em; one we can eat for our dinner, and one she shall have to keep. But were n't you unwise to sacrifice your poultry, Abby? You always need eggs, and hens don't cost much to keep."

"Why, yes, I shall miss 'em," said Abby; "but, you see, I had to do every way to get my rent-money. Now the shop's shut down I have n't got any way of earnin' anything, and I spent what little I've saved through the summer."

"Your aunt Cynthia ought to know it an' ought to help you," said Mrs. Hand. "You're a real foolish person, I must say. I expect you do for her when she ought to do for you."

"She's old, an' she's all the near relation I've got," said the little woman. "I've always felt the time would come when she'd need me, but it's been her great pleasure to live alone an' feel free. I shall get along somehow, but I shall have it hard. Somebody may want help for a spell this winter, but I'm afraid I shall have to give up my house. 'T ain't as if I owned it. I don't know just what to do, but there'll be a way."

Mrs. Hand shifted her two pies to the other arm, and stepped across to the other side of the road where the ground looked a little smoother.

"No, I would n't worry if I was you, Abby," she said. "There, I suppose if 't was me I should worry a good deal more! I expect I should lay awake nights." But Abby answered nothing, and they came to a steep place in the road and found another subject for conversation at the top.

"Your aunt don't know we're coming?" asked the chief guest of the occasion.

"Oh, no, I never send her word," said Miss Pendexter. "She'd be so desirous to get everything ready, *just as she used to.*"

"She never seemed to make any trouble o' havin' company; she always appeared so easy and pleasant, and let you set with her while she made her preparations," said Mrs. Hand, with great approval. "Some has such a dreadful way of making you feel inopportune, and you can't always send word you're comin'. I did have a visit once that's always been a lesson to me; 't was years ago; I don't know's I ever told you?"

"I don't believe you ever did," responded the listener to this somewhat indefinite prelude.

"Well, 't was one hot summer afternoon. I set forth an' took a great long walk 'way over to Mis' Eben Fulham's, on the cross-road between the cranberry ma'sh and Staples's Corner. The doctor was drivin' that way, an' he give me a lift that shortened it some at the last; but I never should have started, if I'd known 't was so far. I had been promisin' all summer to go, and every time I saw Mis' Fulham, Sundays, she'd say somethin' about it. We wa'n't very well acquainted, but always friendly. She moved here from Bedford Hill."

"Oh, yes; I used to know her," said Abby, with interest.

"Well, now, she did give me a beautiful welcome when I got there," continued Mrs. Hand. "'T was about four o'clock in the afternoon, an' I told her I'd come to accept her invitation if 't was convenient, an' the doctor had been called several miles beyond and expected to be detained, but he was goin' to pick me up as he returned about seven; 't was very kind of him. She took me right in, and she did appear so pleased, an' I must go right into the best room where 't was cool, and then she said she'd have tea early, and I should have to excuse her a short time. I asked *her not to make any difference, and if I could n't*

assist her ; but she said no, I must just take her as I found her ; and she give me a large fan, and off she went.

“There! I was glad to be still and rest where ’twas cool, an’ I set there in the rockin’-chair an’ enjoyed it for a while, an’ I heard her clacking at the oven door out beyond, an’ gittin’ out some dishes. She was a brisk-actin’ little woman, an’ I thought I’d caution her when she come back not to make up a great fire, only for a cup o’ tea, perhaps. I started to go right out in the kitchen, an’ then somethin’ told me I’d better not, we never ’d been so free together as that ; I did n’t know how she’d take it, an’ there I set an’ set. ’Twas sort of a greenish light in the best room, an’ it begun to feel a little damp to me, — the s’rubs outside grew close up to the windows. Oh, it did seem dreadful long ! I could hear her busy with the dishes an’ beatin’ eggs an’ stirrin’, an’ I knew she was puttin’ herself out to get up a great supper, and I kind o’ fidgeted about a little an’ even stepped to the door, but I thought she’d expect me to remain where I was. I saw everything in that room forty times over, an’ I did divert myself killin’ off a brood o’ moths that was in a worsted-work mat on the table. It all fell to pieces. I never saw such a sight o’ moths to once. But occupation failed after that, an’ I begun to feel sort o’ tired an’ numb. There was one o’ them late crickets got into the room an’ begun to chirp, an’ it sounded kind o’ fallish. I could n’t help sayin’ to myself that Mis’ Fulham had forgot all about my bein’ there. I thought of all the beauties of hospitality that ever I see! —”

“Did n’t she ever come back at all, not whilst things was in the oven, nor nothin’?” inquired Miss Pendexter, with awe.

“I never see her again till she come beamin’ to the

parlor door an' invited me to walk out to tea," said Mrs. Hand. "'T was 'most a quarter past six by the clock; I thought 't was seven. I'd thought o' every-thing, an' I'd counted, an' I'd trotted my foot, an' I'd looked more 'n twenty times to see if there was any more moth-millers."

"I s'pose you did have a very nice tea?" suggested Abby, with interest.

"Oh, a beautiful tea! She could n't have done more if I'd been the Queen," said Mrs. Hand. "I don't know how she could ever have done it all in the time, I'm sure. The table was loaded down; there was cup-custards and custard pie, an' cream pie, an' two kinds o' hot biscuits, an' black tea as well as green, an' elegant cake, — one kind she'd just made new, and called it quick cake; I've often made it since — an' she'd opened her best preserves, two kinds. We set down together, an' I'm sure I appreciated what she'd done; but 't wa'n't no time for real conversation whilst we was to the table, and before we got quite through the doctor come hurryin' along, an' I had to leave. He asked us if we'd had a good talk, as we come out, an' I couldn't help laughing to myself; but she said quite hearty that she'd had a nice visit from me. She appeared well satisfied, Mis' Fulham did; but for me, I was disappointed; an' early that fall she died."

Abby Pendexter was laughing like a girl; the speaker's tone had grown more and more complaining. "I do call that a funny experience," she said. "'Better a dinner o' herbs.' I guess that text must ha' risen to your mind in connection. You must tell that to Aunt Cynthia, if conversation seems to fail." And she laughed again, but Mrs. Hand still looked solemn and reproachful.

"*Here we are; there's Aunt Cynthia's lane right*

ahead, there by the great yellow birch," said Abby. "I must say, you 've made the way seem very short, Mis' Hand."

III

Old Aunt Cynthia Dallett sat in her high-backed rocking-chair by the little north window, which was her favorite dwelling-place.

"New Year's Day again," she said, aloud, — "New Year's Day again!" And she folded her old bent hands, and looked out at the great woodland view and the hills without really seeing them, she was lost in so deep a reverie. "I'm gittin' to be very old," she added, after a little while.

It was perfectly still in the small gray house. Outside in the apple trees there were some blue-jays flitting about and calling noisily, like schoolboys fighting at their games. The kitchen was full of pale winter sunshine. It was more like late October than the first of January, and the plain little room seemed to smile back into the sun's face. The outer door was standing open into the green dooryard, and a fat small dog lay asleep on the step. A capacious cupboard stood behind Mrs. Dallett's chair and kept the wind away from her corner. Its doors and drawers were painted a clean lead-color, and there were places round the knobs and buttons where the touch of hands had worn deep into the wood. Every braided rug was straight on the floor. The square clock on its shelf between the front windows looked as if it had just had its face washed and been wound up for a whole year to come. If Mrs. Dallett turned her head she could look into the bedroom, where her plump feather bed was covered with its dark blue homespun winter quilt. It was all very peaceful and comfortable, but it was very lonely. *By her side, on a light-stand, lay the religious news-*

paper of her denomination, and a pair of spectacles whose jointed silver bows looked like a funny two-legged beetle cast helplessly upon its back.

"New Year's Day again," said old Cynthia Dallett. Time had left nobody in her house to wish her a Happy New Year, — she was the last one left in the old nest. "I'm gittin' to be very old," she said for the second time; it seemed to be all there was to say.

She was keeping a careful eye on her friendly clock, but it was hardly past the middle of the morning, and there was no excuse for moving; it was the long hour between the end of her slow morning work and the appointed time for beginning to get dinner. She was so stiff and lame that this hour's rest was usually most welcome, but to-day she sat as if it were Sunday, and did not take up her old shallow splint basket of braiding-rags from the side of her footstool.

"I do hope Abby Pendexter 'll make out to git up to see me this afternoon as usual," she continued. "I know 't ain't so easy for her to get up the hill as it used to be, but I do seem to want to see some o' my own folks. I wish 't I'd thought to send her word I expected her when Jabez Hooper went back after he came up here with the flour. I'd like to have had her come prepared to stop two or three days."

A little chickadee perched on the window-sill outside and bobbed his head sideways to look in, and then pecked impatiently at the glass. The old woman laughed at him with childish pleasure and felt companioned; it was pleasant at that moment to see the life in even a bird's bright eye.

"Sign of a stranger," she said, as he whisked his wings and flew away in a hurry. "I must throw out some crumbs for 'em; it's getting to be hard pickin' for the stayin'-birds." She looked past the trees of *her little orchard* now with seeing eyes, and followed

the long forest slopes that led downward to the low-land country. She could see the two white steeples of Fairfield Village, and the map of fields and pastures along the valley beyond, and the great hills across the valley to the westward. The scattered houses looked like toys that had been scattered by children. She knew their lights by night, and watched the smoke of their chimneys by day. Far to the northward were higher mountains, and these were already white with snow. Winter was already in sight, but to-day the wind was in the south, and the snow seemed only part of a great picture.

"I do hope the cold 'll keep off a while longer," thought Mrs. Dallett. "I don't know how I'm going to get along after the deep snow comes."

The little dog suddenly waked, as if he had had a bad dream, and after giving a few anxious whines he began to bark outrageously. His mistress tried, as usual, to appeal to his better feelings.

"T ain't nobody, Tiger," she said. "Can't you have some patience? Maybe it's some foolish boys that's rangin' about with their guns." But Tiger kept on, and even took the trouble to waddle in on his short legs, barking all the way. He looked warningly at her, and then turned and ran out again. Then she saw him go hurrying down to the bars, as if it were an occasion of unusual interest.

"I guess somebody is comin'; he don't act as if 't were a vagrant kind o' noise; must really be somebody in our lane." And Mrs. Dallett smoothed her apron and gave an anxious housekeeper's glance round the kitchen. None of her state visitors, the minister or the deacons, ever came in the morning. Country people are usually too busy to go visiting in the forenoons.

Presently two figures appeared where the road came

out of the woods, — the two women already known to the story, but very surprising to Mrs. Dallett; the short, thin one was easily recognized as Abby Pendexter, and the taller, stout one was soon discovered to be Mrs. Hand. Their old friend's heart was in a glow. As the guests approached they could see her pale face with its thin white hair framed under the close black silk handkerchief.

"There she is at her window smilin' away!" exclaimed Mrs. Hand; but by the time they reached the doorstep she stood waiting to meet them.

"Why, you two dear creatur's!" she said, with a beaming smile. "I don't know when I've ever been so glad to see folks comin'. I had a kind of left-all-alone feelin' this mornin', an' I did n't even make bold to be certain o' you, Abby, though it looked so pleasant. Come right in an' set down. You're all out o' breath, ain't you, Mis' Hand?"

Mrs. Dallett led the way with eager hospitality. She was the tiniest little bent old creature, her handkerchiefed head was quick and alert, and her eyes were bright with excitement and feeling, but the rest of her was much the worse for age; she could hardly move, poor soul, as if she had only a make-believe framework of a body under a shoulder-shawl and thick petticoats. She got back to her chair again, and the guests took off their bonnets in the bedroom, and returned discreet and sedate in their black woolen dresses. The lonely kitchen was blest with society at last, to its mistress's heart's content. They talked as fast as possible about the weather, and how warm it had been walking up the mountain, and how cold it had been a year ago, that day when Abby Pendexter had been kept at home by a snowstorm and missed her visit. "And I ain't seen you now, aunt, since the *twenty-eighth* of September, but I've thought of you

a great deal, and looked forward to comin' more'n usual," she ended, with an affectionate glance at the pleased old face by the window.

"I've been wantin' to see you, dear, and wonderin' how you was gettin' on," said Aunt Cynthia kindly. "And I take it as a great attention to have you come to-day, Mis' Hand," she added, turning again towards the more distinguished guest. "We have to put one thing against another. I should hate dreadfully to live anywhere except on a high hill farm, 'cordin' as I was born an' raised. But there ain't the chance to neighbor that townfolks has, an' I do seem to have more lonely hours than I used to when I was younger. I don't know but I shall soon be gittin' too old to live alone." And she turned to her niece with an expectant, lovely look, and Abby smiled back.

"I often wish I could run in an' see you every day, aunt," she answered. "I have been sayin' so to Mrs. Hand."

"There, how anybody does relish company when they don't have but a little of it!" exclaimed Aunt Cynthia. "I am all alone to-day; there is going to be a shootin'-match somewhere the other side o' the mountain, an' Johnny Foss, that does my chores, begged off to go when he brought the milk unusual early this mornin'. Gener'lly he's about here all the fore part of the day; but he don't go off with the boys very often, and I like to have him have a little sport; 't was New Year's Day, anyway; he's a good, stiddy boy for my wants."

"Why, I wish you Happy New Year, aunt!" said Abby, springing up with unusual spirit. "Why, that's just what we come to say, and we like to have forgot all about it!" She kissed her aunt, and stood a minute holding her hand with a soft, affectionate touch. Mrs.

Hand rose and kissed Mrs. Dallett too, and it was a moment of ceremony and deep feeling.

"I always like to keep the day," said the old hostess, as they seated themselves and drew their splint-bottomed chairs a little nearer together than before. "You see, I was brought up to it, and father made a good deal of it; he said he liked to make it pleasant and give the year a fair start. I can see him now, how he used to be standing there by the fireplace when we came out o' the two bedrooms early in the morning, an' he always made out, poor 's he was, to give us some little present, and he'd heap 'em up on the corner o' the mantlepiece, an' we'd stand front of him in a row, and mother be bustling about gettin' breakfast. One year he give me a beautiful copy o' the 'Life o' General Lafayette,' in a green cover, — I've got it now, but we child'n 'bout read it to pieces, — an' one year a nice piece o' blue ribbon, an' Abby — that was your mother, Abby — had a pink one. Father was real kind to his child'n. I thought o' them early days when I first waked up this mornin', and I could n't help lookin' up then to the corner o' the shelf just as I used to look."

"There 's nothin' so beautiful as to have a bright childhood to look back to," said Mrs. Hand. "Sometimes I think child'n has too hard a time now, — all the responsibility is put on to 'em, since they take the lead o' what to do an' what they want, and get to be so toppin' an' knowin'. 'T was happier in the old days, when the fathers an' mothers done the rulin'."

"They say things have changed," said Aunt Cynthia; "but staying right here, I don't know much of any world but my own world."

Abby Pendexter did not join in this conversation, but sat in her straight-backed chair with folded hands and the air of a good child. The little old dog had followed her in, and now lay sound asleep again at

her feet. The front breadth of her black dress looked rusty and old in the sunshine that slanted across it, and the aunt's sharp eyes saw this and saw the careful darns. Abby was as neat as wax, but she looked as if the frost had struck her. "I declare, she's gittin' along in years," thought Aunt Cynthia compassionately. "She begins to look sort o' set and dried up, Abby does. She ought n't to live all alone; she's one that needs company."

At this moment Abby looked up with new interest. "Now, aunt," she said, in her pleasant voice, "I don't want you to forget to tell me if there ain't some sewin' or mendin' I can do whilst I'm here. I know your hands trouble you some, an' I may's well tell you we're bent on stayin' all day an' makin' a good visit, Mis' Hand an' me."

"Thank ye kindly," said the old woman; "I do want a little sewin' done before long, but 't ain't no use to spile a good holiday." Her face took a resolved expression. "I'm goin' to make other arrangements," she said. "No, you need n't come up here to pass New Year's Day an' be put right down to sewin'. I make out to do what mendin' I need, an' to sew on my hooks an' eyes. I get Johnny Foss to thread me up a good lot o' needles every little while, an' that helps me a good deal. Abby, why can't you step into the best room an' bring out the rockin'-chair? I seem to want Mis' Hand to have it."

"I opened the window to let the sun in awhile," said the niece, as she returned. "It felt cool in there an' shut up."

"I thought of doin' it not long before you come," said Mrs. Dallett, looking gratified. Once the taking of such a liberty would have been very provoking to her. "Why, it does seem good to have somebody think o' things an' take right hold like that!"

"I'm sure you would, if you were down at my house," said Abby, blushing. "Aunt Cynthia, I don't suppose you could feel as if 't would be best to come down an' pass the winter with me, — just durin' the cold weather, I mean. You'd see more folks to amuse you, an' — I do think of you so anxious these long winter nights."

There was a terrible silence in the room, and Miss Pendexter felt her heart begin to beat very fast. She did not dare to look at her aunt at first.

Presently the silence was broken. Aunt Cynthia had been gazing out of the window, and she turned towards them a little paler and older than before, and smiling sadly.

"Well, dear, I'll do just as you say," she answered. "I'm beat by age at last, but I've had my own way for eighty-five years, come the month o' March, an' last winter I did use to lay awake an' worry in the long storms. I'm kind o' humble now about livin' alone to what I was once." At this moment a new light shone in her face. "I don't expect you'd be willin' to come up here an' stay till spring, — not if I had Foss's folks stop for you to ride to meetin' every pleasant Sunday, an' take you down to the Corners plenty o' other times besides?" she said beseechingly. "No, Abby, I'm too old to move now; I should be homesick down to the village. If you'll come an' stay with me, all I have shall be yours. Mis' Hand hears me say it."

"Oh, don't you think o' that; you're all I've got near to me in the world, an' I'll come an' welcome," said Abby, though the thought of her own little home gave a hard tug at her heart. "Yes, Aunt Cynthia, I'll come, an' we'll be real comfortable together. I've been lonesome sometimes —"

"*T will be best for both,*" said Mrs. Hand judi-

cially. And so the great question was settled, and suddenly, without too much excitement, it became a thing of the past.

"We must be thinkin' o' dinner," said Aunt Cynthia gayly. "I wish I was better prepared; but there's nice eggs an' pork an' potatoes, an' you girls can take hold an' help." At this moment the roast chicken and the best mince pies were offered and kindly accepted, and before another hour had gone they were sitting at their New Year feast, which Mrs. Dallett decided to be quite proper for the Queen.

Before the guests departed, when the sun was getting low, Aunt Cynthia called her niece to her side and took hold of her hand.

"Don't you make it too long now, Abby," said she. "I shall be wantin' ye every day till you come; but you must n't forgit what a set old thing I be."

Abby had the kindest of hearts, and was always longing for somebody to love and care for; her aunt's very age and helplessness seemed to beg for pity.

"This is Saturday; you may expect me the early part of the week; and thank you, too, aunt," said Abby.

Mrs. Hand stood by with deep sympathy. "It's the proper thing," she announced calmly. "You'd both of you be a sight happier; and truth is, Abby's wild an' reckless, an' needs somebody to stand right over her, Mis' Dallett. I guess she'll try an' behave, but there — there's no knowin'!" And they all laughed. Then the New Year guests said farewell and started off down the mountain road. They looked back more than once to see Aunt Cynthia's face at the window as she watched them out of sight. Miss Abby Pendexter was full of excitement; she looked as happy as a child.

"I feel as if we'd gained the battle of Waterloo," said Mrs. Hand. "I've really had a most beautiful

time. You an' your aunt must n't forgit to invite me up some time again to spend another day."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

What hints do you get of regretful memories as Mrs. Hand talks of herself? How do her further remarks show a generous appreciation of others? What haunting fear in the lives of the poor does their conversation bring out? What effect do plans for doing pleasant things for others have upon these two lonely people, especially Miss Pendexter?

As they begin their walk, how does Abby's talk about herself enlarge your sympathy for her? What words of Mrs. Hand's show a delicate and refined feeling for her friend's troubles? What fine sense of hospitality is brought out in Aunt Cynthia's character by Mrs. Hand's account of her call on Mrs. Fulham?

How does description of Aunt Cynthia and her secluded mountain home give you a glimpse of her life and of life that had passed there? How does description reflect the mood in which she is? What kind sentiments and memories of pleasant, happy scenes filled Aunt Cynthia's heart as she talked of her past life? What did "home" mean to Aunt Cynthia? What effect does her cheerful bravery have upon you?

Technique

Introduction. Note the abruptness of the introduction. It breaks into the conversation at an *interesting point* where the *theme* of the story is given.

Plot. This story is an illustration of the little importance of the plot, as the chief interest lies in *character portrayal*.

Character. The people are commonplace, but they are so portrayed that their essential nobility appears. You are made to feel how keen and varied may be the emotions of humble lives.

Background. This story is an excellent example of what is called *local color in setting*, or *background*. Find descriptions that give you the real *atmosphere* of the place. Find descriptions of the characters that show how their lives are *intimately associated* with the place in which they are passed.

THE DAY OF THE CYCLONE

By OCTAVE THANET

It was a warm day. Perhaps but for that it might not have happened, since Captain Barris is a most temperate man. Unluckily, the day was warm, very warm, and Archy was tired with a long ride in the "accommodation train"; and a vision of a glass of beer—cool, foaming, pleasantly stinging—rose before him. He had just been stationed at Rock Island Arsenal, and all his knowledge of the town of Grinnell was the fact that he had inherited some property within its limits. Quite innocently, therefore, he stared about him for some sign of refreshment.

The street was like a hundred rural streets in the West—straight, broad, and shaded by young trees.

All the wooden cottages might have been designed by the same prosaic architect.

Some of them looked a little rusty; many of them shone with new paint. They all had trim gardens in front, oases of verdure in the midst of the dust. Between the dwellings, every now and then, there would come a great gap of untilled fields, where no mower disturbed the riotous plantain, and burdock and jimson weeds held a kind of squalid revelry over a heap of tin cans. The contrast between this unkempt domain and the tidiness of the dwellings was queer; but it was as Western as the sea of prairie around the town, or the fierce sun above.

No quiver in the hot air blurred the shadows of the maple leaves on the sidewalks. A few farmers' wagons *crawled* tediously through the glare. Just ahead of

Archy was the solitary other footman in sight. He was a big man, thin, but built on the large and sinewy plan. Though it was so warm, his gray head was covered with a soft black felt hat, and he wore the heaviest of boots. To equalize matters, he carried his black coat on his arm and had unbuttoned his old-fashioned waistcoat. He walked slowly, with the round shoulders and uneven gait of a man accustomed to watch the ground.

So little did Archy know of the interior of Iowa that he marched up to this old man and asked where he could get a glass of beer.

His answer was the view of a gaunt and weather-beaten visage and a portentous frown.

"Kin I tell you where ye kin get a glass of beer?" repeated the man, who frowned as the keen gray eyes under the beetling brows took in Archy's elegant figure, from the white Derby hat of the period to his immaculate gaiters. "No, young man, I cayn't; and I'd advise you to quit huntin' up beer, or ye won't wear sich good clo'se long. Anyhow, ye won't find no beer in Grinnell."

"What's the trouble with Grinnell?"

"The trouble is, it's a prohibition town; and prohibition in Grinnell does prohibit. There ain't a saloon in the place. Ye cayn't git a drop of intoxicatin' liquor, not a drop —"

Here his underjaw fell, his eyeballs fixed themselves in a dismal stare; and the didactic forefinger, that had been sawing the air, was paralyzed midway, so that it pointed straight at the red-faced man reeling round the corner. The look and the swagger of him were unmistakable.

"Perhaps *he* could tell me," said Archy.

He made the old man a very fine bow and walked away, smiling.

But when he returned to Grinnell, a year later, he was more serious. "I dare say Rachel's father is another of the same sort," he reflected; "if not — by Jove, that would be too much, though!"

He laughed a little lugubriously. Rachel was beautiful enough, and, what was better, sweet and good enough to justify any man's passion; and he was as much in love as a man can well be; but he thought of her people with a qualm.

"I grant that Rachel is an angel" — so his mother had talked — "and the angels are above social distinctions; but her father and mother?"

"Her mother is presumedly an angel, too," Archy had replied, "she has been dead these ten years."

"Well, there are her father and two brothers. And she told me that there was a cousin visiting them whom her father was going to marry. *She* comes from Vermont; but I don't believe the boys have ever been out of Grinnell in their lives. You can't judge these people by the Ramsays, Archy; the Ramsays have been everywhere. It was only a freak of Mr. Ramsay's, sending Ethel to Grinnell. Archy, I feel sure her people are *impossible*!"

"I shan't marry her people," Archy had said, lightly.

But now, with some misgivings, he scanned the elderly men coming home to their midday dinners, any one of whom might be *her* father. Sedate, prosperous looking men they were, very like men of their years in a New England village, except for a slight Western negligence of dress.

"Ramsay is right," mused Archy; "Grinnell is a Puritan colony in the prairie."

He was in the college campus, now. The ugly, square stone building he judged to be the college hall, and from the number of heads at the windows, he sur-

mised that a tall brick building was a kind of dormitory. The pretty cottages about must be the professors' houses, and the young men and maidens among the trees must be the students. He thought that the youths had rather a rustic air, but some of the girls were admirably pretty, and the ripple of their gayety spread to the faces of the passers-by.

"But not one of them," was his comment, "can compare with Rachel — Hallo! here's the house."

A doorplate left him in no doubt. The house was of wood, of two stories, and had two bay-windows and a piazza. It was painted gray, and the blinds were red. There was a garden before it full of rosebushes, and the roses were in bloom. Archy grew a little dizzy; he had not seen Rachel for a week; he would see her in a moment, and being a modest, true-hearted young fellow, very much in love, his soul abased itself before this delicate and radiant creature that he was daring to make his own.

"My white rose," murmured the lover, "I am not worthy, but I will try."

"Cayn't ye make nobuddy hear ye? That gong's intended to ring," remarked a harsh, deep voice at his elbow. An old man had come around a bay-window to find Archy smiling tenderly at the doorplate. It was the same old man whom he had met before.

"I am looking for Mr. Jared Meadows," said Archy, whose heart sank down to his boots.

"Well, you've found him."

Inwardly Archy groaned. Outwardly he bowed, and said, "I am Captain Barris."

"Walk in," said Meadows, throwing the door open, but with no gleam of cordiality on his face.

He strode on before, Archy thinking how familiar his back looked, for he was in his shirt-sleeves. He *had also dispensed* with shoes, and his white socks

glimmered in the obscurity of the hall. Archy followed him into a pretty room, and took the chair pushed forward. The old man seated himself opposite, planted his hands on his knees in the fashion of a rustic photograph, and proceeded to subject the young officer to a grim and leisurely scrutiny. Decidedly, it was not a promising welcome.

However, one cannot sit indefinitely staring at one's prospective father-in-law, so Archy cleared his throat and began. He presumed Mr. Meadows knew the object of his visit. He had met Miss Meadows at her friend Miss Ramsay's.

"Six weeks ago," interrupted the old man, "and now ye want to marry her."

A trifle disconcerted, Archy next tried to explain his position and prospects. "He was in the army, stationed at Rock Island Arsenal. The quarters there—"

"That 's all right," said the old man, "I've been on the Island. Big thing. Big arsenal. But I want to hear 'bout *you*."

"Oh, I? I am twenty-eight years of age. My father was in the army, General Barris. He was killed in the war. It is rather an army family. My mother is a Massachusetts woman. She was a Miss Saltonstall."

"Dependent on you?"

"She has about half a million dollars from her father. I have one sister, who is married, and lives in New York. She is not dependent on me either. My mother lives with me. She—everybody thinks my mother a charming woman."

"But Rachel ain't goin' to marry your mother. Cayn't seem to git ye to talk 'bout yourself. Ramsay gives you a fine send off in his letter; but things don't strike him and I just the same. I guess you're a desirable husband as the world looks at things; but I

ain't one of the world's people. Never was. You ain't the kind of husband I'd pick out for my daughter. Nor yours ain't the kind of life I'd choose for her. But if you're a good man, and likely to make her happy, I won't stand in the way. It's nature, I s'pose. I took her mother off to Kansas, 'way from her folks, an' now you want to take her, an' she's glad to go; but 't ain't nature I should be glad to have her. Well, now, s'posin' you stop to dinner an' give me a chance to sorter size ye up; an' if I like the look o' ye I'll go down to Rock Island, and if you're satisfactory all 'round, it will be time to talk of marrying."

"I shall wait until after dinner, then," said Archy, smiling.

No answering smile relaxed the other's iron features as he replied: "All right. Make yourself to home. I'll go tell the folks."

He left Archy in a frame of mind about equally compounded of irritation, amusement, and consternation. The young man could not help laughing as he pictured his mother's horror when she should see Meadows. "Well, anyhow, I don't blame him for not wanting to give up Rachel," he thought, gazing about the room for some trace of this one sweet presence. He rightly judged the soft hues of the walls and draperies, and the pretty feminine fancies of wicker-work and ribbon, to be of her choosing; but he gave old Meadows full credit for the plaster group representing the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and for a huge, pale engraving of Lincoln in the bosom of his family. Above the mantel-piece hung a water-color portrait, sumptuously framed, with a jar of roses before it, like an offering before a shrine. Plainly, it was the important object in the room. The portrait was a man's head. The features, *the brows, and the contour of the face, which was*

clean shaven, reminded Archy of those multitudinous busts in the Vatican. Like them, also, was the singularly calm and determined expression. But the blue eyes were mild, sad, and dreamy. Archy had risen for a nearer view, when the inmates of the house appeared. They were Rachel, her future stepmother, and her two brothers. The future stepmother was introduced as Miss Baker. She resembled Rachel in figure and carriage, rather than in features or coloring; and Archy had a fancy that her gentle, faded face looked a good deal as the late Mrs. Meadows's might have done at the age of — say forty. But, naturally, his glance only lingered a polite instant before it sought Rachel. Her lover had often compared Rachel to the wild flowers growing in the clefts of New England rocks. Her extraordinary beauty was of that fragile type that has a pathos in its very charm. Really, Rachel was both healthy and happy, and her father loved to boast of her prowess in mathematics at the Grinnell College; yet, whoever looked on her exquisite, pale face, with its wistful eyes and sensitive mouth, felt an involuntary sympathy, well enough interpreted by Archy's mother's remark: "That is the kind of girl who can break her heart!" She was a creature to whom one is gentle by instinct. Nevertheless, such creatures have their own strength. She was graceful because she could not help it, and had a natural sense of beauty. Archy felt a fond pride as the lovely shape approached. Nothing more than a white frock and some red roses; but how they suited her!

By this time he was back in his chair, beaming with great friendliness upon the two youths, Ossawatomie ("Is he named for an Indian chief?" wondered Archy) and Jared. They were twin brothers, *two years* younger than Rachel; both tall, slim, and

shy; having their sister's fascinating combination of bronze hair and dark-brown eyes, but with features that were a softened copy of their father's. Jared did not open his lips; Ossawatomie made some timid advances. To help on the lagging talk, Archy spoke of the water-color. "It was painted on East," said Ossawatomie, "from a daguerreotype. It is John Brown."

"The Queen's John Brown, or John Brown's body?" Archy asked, with his fatal levity.

"That, sir," said a deep voice, "is John Brown of Ossawatomie, the noblest man that ever died for liberty!"

Archy had not seen him approach, and who can hear the footfall of socks? There he stood in the doorway, forefinger uplifted, as grim and dark a figure as ever sent a witch to the gallows. "Well, sir," he continued, "what is *your* opinion of him?"

"He was a hero, certainly," said Archy, "whatever his mistakes."

"*What* mistakes?"

"Well, Harper's Ferry. And that Missouri affair where they dragged men out of their cabins, and shot them in the hearing of their wives and children —"

The old man interrupted him as usual: "Brown was n't on that raid. But that ain't sayin' he condemned it; he did n't. And you need n't waste much pity on them men. They had blood on their own hands, every one of them; they had murdered Free State men; and they were judged, condemned, and killed for it, as they had ought to be. That's all there is to that affair. Those border ruffians used to ride over into Kansas, and slay, and steal, and burn. They'd come over and vote, and make our laws for us. Then they'd shoot us 'cause we objected. Did n't *ye never hear* of the sack of Lawrence? A neighbor

of mine was shot down, right before his wife, by three men. Three to one, those were their odds. I know all about it, for I was one of Brown's men. I was only a stripling, but I had the luck to be in four fights, and I got a bullet in my leg that, like's not, saved my life, for else I'd a gone off with Brown to Harper's Ferry, so I guess I owe one good turn to a border ruffian. But, I tell you, I did n't thank him for it when I read in the papers how those he counted on failed him, and he was trapped and lay wounded in prison, and then how he — died. I'd lay on my bed and cry, 'cause I could n't be there and fight it out with him. Say, sir, you that call Harper's Ferry a *mistake*, say, did you ever read the letters he wrote when he was in prison in Charleston?"

"No, I don't think I have; I don't remember them," said Archy, meekly.

"Then you'd better, 'fore ye discuss Brown and his mistakes again," said Brown's old follower.

It was a welcome diversion to have Rachel, who had left the room for a second, return to announce dinner. Archy managed to get near enough to her for a whisper; but she only gave him a frightened glance and said: "*Please* don't talk about Brown to pa until you know more. Ossie's named after him. Pa thinks the world of him!"

The meal began ominously. Archy had been praising the pretty town.

"We owe our prosperity to our liquor laws," said Mr. Meadows. "Humph, did ye find any beer that day?"

So he had remembered! Archy, blushing in spite of himself, said no, he had n't tried.

"You drink to home, I s'pose. Have wine on the table?"

Archy confessed to an occasional glass of claret *with his dinner*.

"Them boys," said the old man, slanting his thumbs at the twins, — "them boys ain't never touched a drop of spirituous liquor in their lives."

"Indeed," said Archy, trying to throw a sympathetic accent into the word.

"Yes, sir. And the majority of the boys here have the same habits. That's the great advantage of a prohibitory law; it makes a town safe to raise boys in. I would n't raise a family in Davenport if you gave me my home."

"But Davenport is a delightful place, don't you know, Mr. Meadows; and, in spite of their saloons, there is n't a town in Iowa with a smaller percentage of criminal business."

"All the same," Meadows retorted, sardonically, "we'll try to improve it a bit. We are going to pass a law that will wipe out the saloons all over Iowa. P'raps you don't believe sich a law kin be enforced?"

"Well, it never has been. Why don't you try high license?"

"Because I don't believe in compromising with evil. That's why! I fought slavery in my youth, an' I'm fighting rum in my old age. And I've been a no-compromise man straight through. I learned that from old John Brown. There was n't much compromising about *him*. It was a grand thing to see him in battle. And they say it was grander to see him die. And yet there was n't a man was gentler or kinder-hearted. He never took no thought of himself. Look at that letter he wrote his wife from the prison, beggin' her not to come to him, 'cause it would use up all her little stock of money, and she might be insulted or hard treated. But I'm wandering. Brown's only a *fanatic* to you. He was not of this world, and the *world martyred* him, an' you compromise men stood

by consenting unto his blood. You're a high-license man yourself, I take it. Believe in doing evil that good may come, hey?"

"Oh, no," said Archy, smiling. Somehow during the last few moments his thoughts had grown kinder to the loyal old partisan. "Oh, no, I merely choose between a little evil and a great deal. I'll take less than the earth. But, really, Mr. Meadows, I have n't studied the subject enough to discuss it. Can't you ask me something easy?"

Ossie ventured to laugh. Jared frowned. "What are your politics?" said the old man, sternly.

"I am not sure that I have any. Sometimes I am a Republican, and sometimes a Democrat. I believe I was a Democrat last."

Now, in the interior of Iowa Republicanism is, still, a species of religion.

A gasp of dismay ran through the circle.

"Those are your opinions, are they?" said the old man, sternly. "A trimmer. Well. Will you have any more meat?"

Archy declined, and Mr. Meadows only spoke to him once again during the meal. The once was when he observed Archy shredding his salad with his fork. "Ain't ye got no knife?" called he. "Lowisa" — to the red-haired maid — "give Captain Barris a knife."

"He's got a knife," the girl said, sharply; "there's your knife!" — pushing the blade at Archy, who silently cut up his lettuce. But Rachel reddened up to her eyes.

The dinner was excellent. I don't know how many hours Rachel and Miss Baker had spent in the kitchen with "Lowisa." The linen was dainty, there were flowers on the table, and the cut-glass tumblers, and the carafe. Rachel had tripped out of the room with

a happy smile, thinking: "Archy will see that we can have pretty things too."

But now, seen through a stranger's eyes, everything was woefully changed.

The oilcloth, to which her father clung because he had always had an oilcloth on his dining-room floor ever since he was married; that preposterous sideboard, and those portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Meadows that a gifted sign-painter had done just before they left Kansas — did Archy notice them, was he laughing at them? Even the table appointments were not an unmixed triumph. Jared asked, where was the "water-pitcher"? "Lowisa" forgot the white apron that had been furnished her. She piled the dishes noisily into dizzy towers, and it was almost an interposition of Providence that she did n't slay Mr. Meadows outright, as she swung the meat platter above his head, with the carving-knife prancing on the edge, while he sat below, like an unconscious Damocles. It was no use trying to catch "Lowisa's" eye; her mind was on the sweets in the kitchen, and you must speak to the point, and in a good round tone too, or she would glare at you and say "*How?*" Rachel thought of Mrs. Barris's dinners, the beautiful room, the glittering table, the noiseless service. Every rough gesture of her father's was like a blow. She could have groaned when he brandished his knife at Archy, in the courage of his opinions, or mopped his face with his napkin. His blunt discourtesy was worse than anything else. "How could he? How could he?" she kept saying to herself, in a spasm of mortification. Yet, all the while, she was angry with her lover. That indefinable thrill of kindred, of the blood that is thicker than water, was sending hot flushes of mingled shame and indignant affection to her cheeks. What could Archy know of her father, of his

heroic devotion to principle, his honesty, that was a proverb in the town, and of how under that harsh exterior was the tenderest, faithfulest heart — why, though he talked so fiercely about saloon-keepers, he had half-supported Gus Timm's family after they sold him out and poured the barrels into the street! What did Archy know, sitting there so easily, sneering at his spiritual betters?

Meanwhile poor Archy, ignorant of this tumult of feeling, was congratulating himself on having kept his temper so well.

The dinner, at last, came to an end. Instantly Meadows spoke to Rachel, "I want to see you a minnit, daughter."

They went out together. Ossie and Miss Baker exchanged a sorrowful glance; and Miss Baker said, "Won't you please step into the parlor, Captain Barris?" in much the same tone in which one might say, "Won't you walk into the silent tomb?"

The air had grown close and warm. Jared flung off his coat without ceremony. Ossie sat on the piano-stool making aimless half-circles of motion and looking dejected. Miss Baker essayed a few commonplaces on the late magazines; but her eyes kept wandering to the door, and Archy's best efforts at sprightliness fell flat; in fact, his listeners gazed at him more and more compassionately. It was a distinct relief, after half an hour of this, to see old Meadows reappear. Simultaneously, as though they were puppets on a single string which he had pulled, the others jumped up and filed out of the room.

Archy felt a dismal presentiment. It was no false prophet; in the fewest and curtest sentences Meadows told him that his proposal must be rejected. "I've looked ye over and ye wun't do," said he, "you 're a drinkin' man —"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Meadows, I was never under the influence of liquor in my life. I don't care for the stuff."

Unconsciously Archy squared his shoulders; he had risen on Mr. Meadows's entrance, and was still standing. The old man looked at him — a gallant figure, erect, athletic, with his fair skin flushing, his handsome head thrown back a little, and his frank blue eyes sparkling. Old Meadows drew an abrupt sigh. "I did n't say you got drunk," he replied; "I said you was a drinkin' man, a moderate drinker, if you like that expression better —"

"*Very moderate.*"

"I don't take no stock in moderate drinkers; if they 're too cold-blooded to go to perdition themselves, they lead other people there, and I ain't sure but that 's worse. You are a Democrat and an aristocrat. Ramsay says you ain't a professor of religion — jest a sort of 'piscopal. We ain't got an opinion in common."

"I beg your pardon, we have *one*, your daughter —"

"That ain't the same thing, even. You think you 're in love with her now, but when you find her principles interferin' with your amusements, and your fine friends are laughing at you behind your back, you 'll git angry with her. I would have more hopes of ye if you 'd stood up fair and square for the bad things you believe in; there 'd be some chance of convertin' you to righteousness; but you 're like the Lacedaemonians the 'postle talks of. Ye shew what was in ye at the dinner-table. Ye did n't want no disputin'; oh, no, you was willin' to make any concessions, till ye 'd got Rachel 'way; then I guess you 'd sing another song. But I tell you, Captain Barris," — he drew himself up to *his full height*, his countenance grew rigid, and he

made a single downward stroke with his forefinger, — “I tell you, I’d rather see my innocent child dead, right here, than married to a cold-hearted, unprincipled, sneerin’ aristocrat that will break her heart, or else ruin her principles.”

“You can hardly expect me to take this as final,” said Archy, coldly.

“Oh! ye kin see Rachel, if ye wanten,” the old man answered. All at once he looked desperately tired and spoke wearily, quite without anger. “It will be an additional pain to her; but you’ve both got it to go through, and ye kin talk it over together. I’ll call her. Good-bye, Captain Barris. I expect ye won’t care for it, but I’m sorry for you.” He extended his hand. Archy felt the same odd movement of friendliness for the stanch old soul that he had felt before, struggling up to the surface of his sensations, through all the anger and sting of the moment.

“No, Mr. Meadows,” said he, “I can’t shake hands, for I mean to do my best to persuade your daughter to marry me.”

“Try,” said the old man, stonily, walking off.

Then Rachel came. She looked white and miserable, and had a package in her hands. Archy would not look at her face; he caught her in his arms, whispering, “You won’t be so cruel, my love; it’s nonsense my giving you up — I can’t!”

“You *must*,” said Rachel, trembling, but trying to release herself; “please let me go, Captain Barris.”

The young man stepped back rather an exaggerated distance. He looked at her steadily. “You don’t mean that you will throw me over like *this*,” said he.

Rachel made a great effort and controlled her voice. It was just the soft, caressing, plaintive voice that one would expect of her; but now it was on that level of *intonation* that comes when the will has to hold every

word steady, lest it turn into a sob. "My father," said she, — "it's all true what my father says; we are altogether different. The people you go with laugh at the things I have been taught were the most important. They call earnest Christian people 'prigs'; and your mother was so surprised when I told her I belonged to the W. C. T. U., and said, 'Oh, my dear, don't; that sort of thing *stamps* one!'. She made me feel as though I had confessed to having been in jail. Captain Barris, your mother is ashamed of me. And you would be if you married me. You *are* ashamed of my folks —" She choked with the remembrance of the torture of the dinner-table.

Archy looked at her in a confusion of anger, pity, and despair. "But, Rachel," he cried, vehemently, "you knew all about this before, when you promised to marry me. What does all this r— stuff matter when we love each other? Come, my darling, when you know us better you will find we have our principles, too, though we may seem to make light of them."

"They are different; *everything* is different. I was afraid always, but I — You had n't seen my father, then; I told you if he consented. But he would be wretched —"

"You would rather make *me* wretched than him?"

Rachel was standing; she sat down before she answered faintly, "Yes."

"Then," said he, "when you told me that last evening on the island that you —"

"Please don't," she whispered; and she said aloud, "Jared!"

Archy did not know that she felt herself fainting, and her cry to her brother, passing by the door, was only because of this. He thought that she wanted to cut the interview short. He was stung to the quick.

He caught up his hat and bowed. "In that case,"

said he, "I will not prolong an interview that seems to distress you. I wish you every good fortune, Miss Meadows."

Not daring to raise her eyes, she dizzily lifted the package in her lap. But he had turned his back. The poor girl had put a few tear-stained words between the lids of her Bible, and placed it with his notes and the trifling gifts that she had allowed him to give her; the little bundle slipped from her limp fingers, and, just as Archie's footsteps pounded along the walk, Rachel's head sank on her brother's arm in the first swoon of her life.

Archy went striding down the street. Well, to this day he has a little tightening of the throat recalling the next few hours. He was in a fever of wrath and anguish: furious with Rachel, who could give him up so tamely, raving at himself for flinging up his chance in a fit of temper. Then he essayed a cynical gayety, and felt his eyes smarting with tears because he had remembered some trumpery incident of the past weeks and the cadences of Rachel's laugh. Ah! have n't we most of us just such moments to remember, with their sickening oscillations of love and anger and despair! How long Archy walked he could not tell, but when he resumed a saner mood enough to look about him, he was among the low hills, covered with wheat and oats, outside the town; and night was falling. Clever alienists have their patients walked to exhaustion sometimes, and perhaps lovers, who are in a measure insane people, may be helped the same way. At any rate, by this time Archy's sweet temper had acquitted Rachel. He even had a glimmer of the truth, and he began to hope again.

He turned himself about, resolved to walk past the Meadows's house. He would not call, but if by accident —

As he passed through the college campus he heard a girl's laugh.

"See how funny the sky looks!" she said to the young man beside her. "Look — you are not looking at all!"

"I have something better to look at," said he.

Archy brushed past them impatiently. Yet it was a strange sky. Although the sun had set, the western sky, up to the zenith, burned with a lurid radiance. Funnel-shaped clouds, inky-black, dipped into this unearthly brilliancy. While Archy looked, he became aware of the utter stillness of the air. Not a bird's chirp, not the hum of an insect. He had a peculiarly ghastly sensation, as of one that feels for a pulse and there is no throb. "What a cursed night!" he muttered. It was the night of the 17th of June, 1882.

He went on. He passed the Meadows's house.

Then he turned, saying to himself that he would go to his hotel and write to Rachel; he even remembered that he had missed his supper, — when he saw Rachel come out of the house. It was too dark to see her face, but he knew her figure and a certain blue shawl that she used to wear. Afire now with hope and impatience, he pursued her. Suddenly that dear form grew dim. The strange light was fading, the black funnels dipped lower, lower into the glow, and the dark tree-leaves began to rustle. Directly, the air vibrated with a horrible grinding noise, compared, afterward, to many sounds, like them all, yet most appallingly different from all. And then — it came! Earth and air were rent into chaos. The tall trees swayed, snapped, fell. Houses were swept from their moorings, and whirled shivering and crashing away. They were chopped into splinters. They were scattered like a handful of dust. There was no more *space*; the air itself was a tumult of darting shapes,

a horror of woeful sounds. Archy was within arm's length of Rachel. He caught her waist; he flung her, or they were thrown together, against the roots of a great elm. "Cling!" he shouted; "lie flat, and hold on for your life!"

Her head and shoulders being in a hollow of the roots were partially protected, and he could further shield them with his own body. He felt the wind of death swaying their limbs; he was struck heavy blows, he was flogged, battered, stung; his tense muscles were ready to snap with the strain, but he clung with the immense energy of despair. The cyclone shot a hundred objects over his head — rafters, branches, the marble top of a table, a beast with hoofs and horns, the pillows of a bed — there was no counting them. A house to his right was smashed like an egg-shell; a row of houses to his left fell in amid frightful screams. Balls of fire were skimming the ground. A girl's face, the face he had seen a moment since, flashed by all white and crooked, and vanished. Not a rod away a man ran toward them, screaming. The wind took him, and he was gone. Somewhere among the trees a piteous little voice cried, "Mamma, come! mamma, come!" Back of him were some people in sore plight, who groaned unceasingly, and a woman shrieked, "Oh! my baby." The storm went roaring over them, houses, barns, trees, hurled on either side of its track. It struck the college, leveled the brick building like a house of cards, peeled roof and upper story off the stone building, and flung a shower of blinds, glass, shingles, and bricks out from the professors' houses.

But surely now the worst was over; they could lie still on the ground, and the voices about them were plainer.

"It's over, thank God!" cried a man's voice.

"Well, it's finished me, anyhow," another answered; "my legs are both broke, and my back, too, I guess. Anybody got any legs to get up and look after that woman's baby?"

The cyclone had gone; but the wind in its wake was blowing furiously, and the rain fell as rain never had fallen in Grinnell before; in fact, a water-spout had burst. One could scarcely stand for the wind or breathe for the rain. And the darkness was horrible.

Archy managed to get on his feet and to raise Rachel. She held on to his arm, sobbing, "Oh, my land! Oh, who is it? What has become of them? Oh, Captain Barris, what has happened?"

It was not Rachel's voice.

At that moment, the heavens blazed from horizon to horizon, while a clap of thunder drowned the multitudinous din of human agony. Who that saw it can forget that woeful battlefield, struck into sight, then swallowed up in blackness — wreck and carnage such as cannot be pictured, and white faces glaring out of their death-traps. Yet Archy could only see one object, Miss Baker's terrified face. "For God's sake, where's Rachel?" he groaned.

"In the house, and he — he — Oh, look! Oh, look!"

Through the sheet of rain, as the lightning flashed again, they both looked. The house was gone.

Miss Baker showed herself the stronger of the two now; it was she who suggested that they might have reached the cellar.

"Let us go," said Archy; "but I can't leave that baby up in the tree. Wait a moment!"

The little captive luckily was so wedged in the branches (held fast by his frock, which was torn in two and rolled round a limb, as if the cyclone had deliberately tied him) that he was merely bruised a *little*, and easily released by the simple expedient

(suggested by Miss Baker) of cutting off the buttons and pulling him out of the dress. Archy stumbled across to the cellar, and at the first sound of the child's voice, a woman caught him, and wept over him. She said that they were all out of the cellar. Only one was badly hurt, and he was calling to them to leave him and go to others who could be helped.

"I wish we could stay," said Miss Baker; "but we must go on, Mrs. Dane. Our house is gone. And Rachel and Mr. Meadows —"

"Oh, God help you!" said the woman; "go, do go!"

Though they used all possible speed, they had to go slowly, the ground being full of great holes where trees had been uprooted, or fence-posts torn out, and encumbered, moreover, with the trunks of trees, and rafters, and piles of brick, and splintered furniture of every kind and shape. Once Archy stumbled over a dead horse, very comfortably disposed on a feather-bed. His next stumble banged his knees against a kitchen stove.

A second later, a lantern was flashed in their eyes, and a wild-faced man shouted, "Is Thomas Reynolds's house down?"

They could not tell him, and he ran by, with his wild face behind his lantern. Somehow, this increased their anxiety. Indeed, there was something very ghastly and awful about the way they would be suddenly close to a fellow-creature in dire misery, and, in the space of a thought, he would be gone, and the rain and the blackness about them again. During all this while, also, there was no diminution of the uproar of shrieks, yells, groans; rather its volume was swelled by new voices, because helpers were seeking for the wounded and the dead, and shouted their presence. Lanterns now twinkled in every direction. The

men of Grinnell were very generally in the business streets when the cyclone came, and this part of the town had escaped. They heard the storm, and saw it break. As soon as they could stand in the gale, they were out with lanterns. A second and a third man passed Archy. The fourth man wrested Miss Baker from his arm, crying, "God be praised! Here, hold these," he said, thrusting an axe and lantern at Archy. The action, it appeared, was to free his arms, that he might embrace Miss Baker, which he did most tenderly. Of course, it was old Jared Meadows.

"Rachel?" gasped Archy.

"Rachel's all right, safe and sound, thank God," Meadows replied; "we got into the cellar. But you, Lida—"

"I should have been killed but for Captain Barris," said she, solemnly; "I never could have held on but for him."

The old man wrung Archy's wrist; he could not wring his hand, since the right held the lantern, and the left the axe.

"She's to be my wife," said he, hoarsely. "I thought I'd lost her."

He made no other attempt at thanks, seeming to think that sentence explained everything. "But my boys, Lida," he continued; "they're both up to the college. I must go to them. Kin *you* take her home?"

"Nobody need take me home," said Miss Baker, who had acted with unexpected spirit and coolness all along. "I know every step of the way, and I ain't a mite hurt. You both go along; you are needed here, and I don't need you. You only hinder me; I cayn't hold up my dress or nothing, getting over the logs, with you 'round!"

She would not even take the lantern, protesting *that they would need it in their work, which was so*

much the case that they did not insist ; and so they parted. The two men turned back to the college. They had not gone very far before Meadows began to swing his lantern, yelling, "Hello, Ossie! This way!"

A young fellow, bounding recklessly over the logs, stopped with a cry of joy ; plainly Ossie. He explained hurriedly that there were five students under the ruins of the brick building, and at least three buried under the roof of Central College. He himself had leaped out of a window as he felt the building lurch. He was bruised and cut, but he had come down all right by the bell. Jared's leg was hurt. Ossie had gotten him out somehow, and he was picking bricks off the other boys ; he said that he could do that since his arms were sound : Ossie must get help and find out about the family. "Run on, my boy," said the father. He looked in an appealing way at Archy. "I guess his eye ain't out, don't you ? It's only the eyelid got tore, ain't it ? I would n't stop him to ask."

"It was only the eyelid. I could see plainly."

The old man drew a deep sigh of relief. "Come on," said he, "you've got mighty good eyes."

Then ensued a night, the most terrible, the most pitiful, and the most noble in Grinnell's history. Well had it been named a colony of Puritans ; for that night, amid desolation and horror, these plain people rose to the stature of heroes. Fortitude, serenity in danger, courage, good sense, magnanimous civic devotion, all the rugged virtues of the Puritan were there, and with them an open-handed generosity and a jocose philosophy born of the prairie air.

Archy and old Meadows worked side by side the night through. They worked amid scenes so awful and so piteous that all the disguises in which we Anglo-Saxons like to muffle up our hearts were torn away.

Archy was prepared to find the old John Brown man a cool, long-headed fellow, brave and patient, in fine, a good comrade; but he did not expect to see him as gentle as a woman with the wounded, and he opened his eyes over the sum that the old man put down on the first subscription paper. "It's a thank-offering to the Lord," said he, solemnly, "for his mercies to me this night."

The two men had worked in the greatest harmony. Indeed, if anything could have amused Archy during those dreadful hours, he would have been amused to observe how Meadows presently came to rely on his quick eyes and strong muscles. Several times the old man jerked a gruff word of approval at the younger one. Finally, he tapped him on the shoulder, saying, "Had 'bout 'nuff of this, ain't ye? I've just got word from Rachel that our barn's all safe, and she an' Lida have got an oil-stove up, and some hot biscuits and coffee and cold ham ready. It's broad daylight, an' I guess we better quit for a while. Jared's there; I'd kinder like to see how his leg's comin' on. An' Lida's waitin' to thank you." His tone changed to one of grave and deep feeling. "I ain't rightly thanked ye for that yet, myself," said he.

Now, several times during the last hours it had occurred to Archy that he was sailing into the old man's favor under false colors. There is a well-defined difference between risking your life for another man's sweetheart and for your own.

It was a temptation; he could see Rachel, and the barn, and the steam of the coffee, and the turn of her white throat as she would look up, and her brown eyes shining. Then he said, sulkily, "That's nothing; I — I ought to tell you I mistook Miss Baker for Rachel."

Meadows's lips twitched with a grin of humorous *appreciation*. Though a Puritan, he was a Westerner.

"I'll bet a cooky you've been on pins and needles," said he, "thinking whether you had ought to tell me, or could git off without." His face softened. "Lida does feature Rachel, an' they've got the same way of walkin'. 'T was that first turned my mind on her." He hesitated. "I guess you'd have done 'bout the same if you had known."

"Of course," said Archy, indignantly.

"Then I don't see but what the obligation's just where it was. I'm glad ye spoke, though; glad ye would n't take gratitude ye thought did n't b'long to ye. My main objection to *you*, Barris, was your bein' so unprincipled; but I guess you've got a conscience, though it's considerable darkened. You've shown yourself a man to-night. I mistrusted you had n't much of a heart either; but when I saw you cryin' over that poor little blinded baby tryin' to make its dead mother hear, an' wipin' your eyes on the sly with your fists, not knowin' you was leaving a black mark every time — oh, ye need n't go rubbin' your face! Bless you, man, you're mud and soot all over, and your coat's bu'st down the back. Your own mother would n't know you! But I guess Rachel will. Come along, come along. You and she will just have to settle your concerns yourselves."

It does not need telling that this settlement was satisfactory. Only it was embarrassing that the old man would not let him go to the hotel, or give him time for the rudest toilet.

But Rachel threw her white arms about that dreadful coat with a sob of happiness.

"And you won't send me away again?" he whispered. "We are to settle it ourselves, your father says. He and I are great chums. Though I must admit," he added, "it took a cyclone to make us so."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

What makes you feel that the man to whom Captain Barris speaks is a man whom you would not wish to oppose? How are you helped to appreciate Archy's anxiety and misgivings on his way to the Meadows's home? From the first conversation between Meadows and Archy until the latter ceases to speak to him at the dinner-table there is an increasing intensity of emotion. During this time what contrasting traits of character and what deeply rooted convictions and prejudices govern the speech and action of the old man? Where do you admire him? Can you defend the extent to which his resentment carried him? What conflicting emotions make Rachel's position so hard to bear? What makes you think her decision right or wrong? From what Meadows knew of Archy, can you find just reasons for the old man's disapproval of the marriage? How do misfortune and suffering reveal the noble traits of the two chief actors in the story? Trace the events that show each to the other in his true character.

Technique

Introduction. Compare this introduction with those in *The Face of the Poor* and *In and Out of a Cab in Amsterdam*. Why does the longer introduction here aid appreciation of the story? Note that the *scene* is described as it appears to the stranger. How is *possibility of action* suggested in the chance meeting between the Captain and the old man? How is curiosity used to *arouse interest*? State in a sentence the *theme* of the story.

Plot. There are two distinct parts in the action of this story. The first is the *rising action*, in which there is a series of situations each more intense in its emotional effect than the preceding, until the *plot complication*, or *entanglement*, reaches its climax in the dismissal of the Captain. The second is the *resolving*, or *untangling*, action bringing the story to a satisfactory conclusion. Trace the plot elements in each part of the action.

You have noticed in your study of previous stories how *important a part mere chance or accident often plays in*

plot construction. What notable example of this do you find in the resolving action of this story?

Character. The character of Meadows is somewhat complex, and you should note the skill of the author in presenting one trait after another as the story progresses.

Background. Study the setting as an example of *local color*. Make a selection of words and phrases that give *life* to the description of the cyclone.

LEFT OUT ON LONE STAR MOUNTAIN

By BRET HARTE

I

THERE was little doubt that the Lone Star claim was "played out." Not dug out, worked out, washed out, but *played* out. For two years its five sanguine proprietors had gone through the various stages of mining enthusiasm; had prospected and planned, dug and doubted. They had borrowed money with hearty but unredeeming frankness, established a credit with unselfish abnegation of all responsibility, and had borne the disappointment of their creditors with a cheerful resignation which only the consciousness of some deep Compensating Future could give. Giving little else, however, a singular dissatisfaction obtained with the traders, and, being accompanied with a reluctance to make further advances, at last touched the gentle stoicism of the proprietors themselves. The youthful enthusiasm which had at first lifted the most ineffectual trial, the most useless essay, to the plane of actual achievement died out, leaving them only the dull, prosaic record of half-finished ditches, purposeless shafts, untenable pits, abandoned engines, and meaningless disruptions of the soil upon the Lone Star claim, and empty flour sacks and pork barrels in the Lone Star cabin.

They had borne their poverty, if that term could be applied to a light renunciation of all superfluities in food, dress, or ornament, ameliorated by the gentle depredations already alluded to, with unassuming *levity*. More than that; having segregated themselves

from their fellow miners of Red Gulch, and entered upon the possession of the little manzanita-thicketed valley five miles away, the failure of their enterprise had assumed in their eyes only the vague significance of the decline and fall of a general community, and to that extent relieved them of individual responsibility. It was easier for them to admit that the Lone Star claim was "played out" than confess to a personal bankruptcy. Moreover, they still retained the sacred right of criticism of government, and rose superior in their private opinions to their own collective wisdom. Each one experienced a grateful sense of the entire responsibility of the other four in the fate of their enterprise.

On December 24, 1863, a gentle rain was still falling over the length and breadth of the Lone Star claim. It had been falling for several days, had already called a faint spring color to the wan landscape, repairing with tender touches the ravages wrought by the proprietors, or charitably covering their faults. The ragged seams in gulch and cañon lost their harsh outlines, a thin green mantle faintly clothed the torn and abraded hillside. A few weeks more, and a veil of forgetfulness would be drawn over the feeble failures of the Lone Star claim. The charming derelicts themselves, listening to the raindrops on the roof of their little cabin, gazed philosophically from the open door, and accepted the prospect as a moral discharge from their obligations. Four of the five partners were present. The Right and Left Bowers, Union Mills, and the Judge.

It is scarcely necessary to say that not one of these titles was the genuine name of its possessor. The Right and Left Bowers were two brothers; their sobriquets, a cheerful adaptation from the favorite game of *euchre*, expressing their relative value in the camp.

The mere fact that Union Mills had at one time patched his trousers with an old flour sack legibly bearing that brand of its fabrication, was a tempting baptismal suggestion that the other partners could not forego. The Judge, a singularly inequitable Missourian, with no knowledge whatever of the law, was an inspiration of gratuitous irony.

Union Mills, who had been for some time sitting placidly on the threshold with one leg exposed to the rain, from a sheer indolent inability to change his position, finally withdrew that weather-beaten member, and stood up. The movement more or less deranged the attitudes of the other partners, and was received with cynical disfavor. It was somewhat remarkable that, although generally giving the appearance of healthy youth and perfect physical condition, they one and all simulated the decrepitude of age and invalidism, and after limping about for a few moments, settled back again upon their bunks and stools in their former positions. The Left Bower lazily replaced a bandage that he had worn around his ankle for weeks without any apparent necessity, and the Judge scrutinized with tender solicitude the faded cicatrix of a scratch upon his arm. A passive hypochondria, born of their isolation, was the last ludicrously pathetic touch of their situation.

The immediate cause of this commotion felt the necessity of an explanation.

"It would have been just as easy for you to have stayed outside with your business leg, instead of dragging it into private life in that obtrusive way," retorted the Right Bower; "but that exhaustive effort is n't going to fill the pork barrel. The grocery man at Dalton says — What's that he said?" he appealed lazily to the Judge.

"Said he reckoned the Lone Star was about played

out, and he did n't want any more in his — thank you!" repeated the Judge with a mechanical effort of memory utterly devoid of personal or present interest.

"I always suspected that man, after Grimshaw begun to deal with him," said the Left Bower. "They're just mean enough to join hands against us." It was a fixed belief of the Lone Star partners that they were pursued by personal enmities.

"More than likely those new strangers over in the Fork have been paying cash and filled him up with conceit," said Union Mills, trying to dry his leg by alternately beating it or rubbing it against the cabin wall. "Once begin wrong with that kind of snipe, and you drag everybody down with you."

This vague conclusion was received with dead silence. Everybody had become interested in the speaker's peculiar method of drying his leg, to the exclusion of the previous topic. A few offered criticism, no one assistance.

"Who did the grocery man say that to?" asked the Right Bower, finally returning to the question.

"The Old Man," answered the Judge.

"Of course," ejaculated the Right Bower sarcastically.

"Of course," echoed the other partners together. "That's like him. The Old Man all over!"

It did not appear exactly what was like the Old Man, or why it was like him, but generally that he alone was responsible for the grocery man's defection. It was put more concisely by Union Mills.

"That comes of letting him go there! It's just a fair provocation to any man to have the Old Man sent to him. They can't, sorter, restrain themselves at him. He's enough to spoil the credit of the Rothschilds."

"That's so," chimed in the Judge. "And look at

his prospecting. Why, he was out two nights last week, all night, prospecting in the moonlight for blind leads, just out of sheer foolishness."

"It was quite enough for me," broke in the Left Bower, "when the other day — you remember when — he proposed to us white men to settle down to plain ground sluicing, making 'grub' wages just like any Chinaman. It just showed his idea of the Lone Star claim."

"Well, I never said it afore," added Union Mills, "but when that one of the Mattison boys came over here to examine the claim with an eye to purchasin', it was the Old Man that took the conceit out of him. He just as good as admitted that a lot of work had got to be done afore any pay ore could be realized. Never even asked him over to the shanty here to jine us in a friendly game; just kept him, so to speak, to himself. And naturally the Mattisons did n't see it."

A silence followed, broken only by the rain monotonously falling on the roof, and occasionally through the broad adobe chimney, where it provoked a retaliating hiss and splutter from the dying embers of the hearth. The Right Bower, with a sudden access of energy, drew the empty barrel before him, and taking a pack of well-worn cards from his pocket, began to make a "solitaire" upon the lid. The others gazed at him with languid interest.

"Makin' it for anythin'?" asked Mills.

The Right Bower nodded.

The Judge and Left Bower, who were partly lying in their respective bunks, sat up to get a better view of the game. Union Mills slowly disengaged himself from the wall, and leaned over the "solitaire" player. The Right Bower turned the last card in a pause of almost thrilling suspense, and clapped it down on the *lid with fateful emphasis.*

"It went!" said the Judge in a voice of hushed respect. "What did you make it for?" he almost whispered.

"To know if we'd make the break we talked about and vamose the ranch. It's the *fifth* time to-day," continued the Right Bower, in a voice of gloomy significance. "And it went agin bad cards too."

"I ain't superstitious," said the Judge, with awe and fatuity beaming from every line of his credulous face, "but it's flyin' in the face of Providence to go agin such signs as that."

"Make it again, to see if the Old Man must go," suggested the Left Bower.

The suggestion was received with favor, the three men gathering breathlessly around the player. Again the fateful cards were shuffled deliberately, placed in their mysterious combination, with the same ominous result. Yet everybody seemed to breathe more freely, as if relieved from some responsibility, the Judge accepting this manifest expression of Providence with resigned self-righteousness.

"Yes, gentlemen," resumed the Left Bower serenely, as if a calm legal decision had just been recorded, "we must not let any foolishness or sentiment get mixed up with this thing, but look at it like business men. The only sensible move is to get up and get out of the camp."

"And the Old Man?" queried the Judge.

"The Old Man — Hush! he's coming."

The doorway was darkened by a slight lissome shadow. It was the absent partner, otherwise known as the "Old Man." Need it be added that he was a boy of nineteen, with a slight down just clothing his upper lip!

"The creek is up over the ford, and I had to 'skin' up a willow on the bank and swing myself across," he

said, with a quick, frank laugh; "but all the same, boys, it's going to clear up in about an hour, you bet. It's breaking away over Bald Mountain, and there's a sun-flash on a bit of snow on Lone Peak. Look! you can see it from here. It's for all the world like Noah's dove just landed on Mount Ararat. It's a good omen."

From sheer force of habit the men had momentarily brightened up at the Old Man's entrance. But the unblushing exhibition of degrading superstition shown in the last sentence recalled their just severity. They exchanged meaning glances. Union Mills uttered hopelessly to himself: "Hell's full of such omens."

Too occupied with his subject to notice this ominous reception, the Old Man continued: "I reckon I struck a fresh lead in the new grocery man at the Crossing. He says he'll let the Judge have a pair of boots on credit, but he can't send them over here; and considering that the Judge has got to try them anyway, it don't seem to be asking too much for the Judge to go over there. He says he'll give us a barrel of pork and a bag of flour if we'll give him the right of using our tail-race and clean out the lower end of it."

"It's the work of a Chinaman, and a four days' job," broke in the Left Bower.

"It took one white man only two hours to clean out a third of it," retorted the Old Man triumphantly, "for *I* pitched in at once with a pick he let me have on credit, and did that amount of work this morning, and told him the rest of you boys would finish it this afternoon."

A slight gesture from the Right Bower checked an angry exclamation from the Left. The Old Man did not notice either, but, knitting his smooth young brow in a paternally reflective fashion, went on: "You'll *have to get* a new pair of trousers, Mills, but as he

does n't keep clothing, we 'll have to get some canvas and cut you out a pair. I traded off the beans he let me have for some tobacco for the Right Bower at the other shop, and got them to throw in a new pack of cards. These are about played out. We 'll be wanting some brushwood for the fire ; there 's a heap in the hollow. Who's going to bring it in? It 's the Judge's turn, is n't it? Why, what 's the matter with you all?"

The restraint and evident uneasiness of his companions had at last touched him. He turned his frank young eyes upon them; they glanced helplessly at each other. Yet his first concern was for them, his first instinct paternal and protecting. He ran his eyes quickly over them; they were all there, and apparently in their usual condition. "Anything wrong with the claim?" he suggested.

Without looking at him the Right Bower rose, leaned against the open door with his hands behind him and his face towards the landscape, and said, apparently to the distant prospect: "The claim 's played out, the partnership 's played out, and the sooner we skedaddle out of this the better. If," he added, turning to the Old Man, "if *you* want to stay, if you want to do Chinaman's work at Chinaman's wages, if you want to hang on to the charity of the traders at the Crossing, you can do it, and enjoy the prospects and the Noah's doves alone. But we 're calculatin' to step out of it."

"But I have n't said I wanted to do it *alone*," protested the Old Man with a gesture of bewilderment.

"If these are your general ideas of the partnership," continued the Right Bower, clinging to the established hypothesis of the other partners for support, "it ain't ours, and the only way we can prove it is to stop the foolishness right here. We calculated to dissolve the *partnership* and strike out for ourselves elsewhere. You 're

no longer responsible for us, nor we for you. And we reckon it's the square thing to leave you the claim and the cabin and all it contains. To prevent any trouble with the traders, we've drawn up a paper here —"

"With a bonus of fifty thousand dollars each down, and the rest to be settled on my children," interrupted the Old Man, with a half-uneasy laugh. "Of course. But" — he stopped suddenly, the blood dropped from his fresh cheek, and he again glanced quickly round the group. "I don't think — I — I quite sabe, boys," he added, with a slight tremor of voice and lip. "If it's a conundrum, ask me an easier one."

Any lingering doubt he might have had of their meaning was dispelled by the Judge. "It's about the softest thing you kin drop into, Old Man," he said confidentially; "if I had n't promised the other boys to go with them, and if I did n't need the best medical advice in Sacramento for my lungs, I'd just enjoy staying with you."

"It gives a sorter freedom to a young fellow like you, Old Man, like goin' into the world on your own capital, that every Californian boy has n't got," said Union Mills patronizingly.

"Of course it's rather hard papers on us, you know, givin' up everything, so to speak; but it's for your good, and we ain't goin' back on you," said the Left Bower; "are we, boys?"

The color had returned to the Old Man's face a little more quickly and freely than usual. He picked up the hat he had cast down, put it on carefully over his brown curls, drew the flap down on the side towards his companions, and put his hands in his pockets. "All right," he said, in a slightly altered voice. "When do you go?"

"To-day," answered the Left Bower. "We calcu-

late to take a moonlight pasear over to the Cross-Roads and meet the down stage at about twelve to-night. There's plenty of time yet," he added, with a slight laugh; "it's only three o'clock now."

There was a dead silence. Even the rain withheld its continuous patter; a dumb, gray film covered the ashes of the hushed hearth. For the first time the Right Bower exhibited some slight embarrassment.

"I reckon it's held up for a spell," he said, ostentatiously examining the weather, "and we might as well take a run round the claim to see if we've forgotten nothing. Of course, we'll be back again," he added hastily, without looking at the Old Man, "before we go, you know."

The others began to look for their hats, but so awkwardly and with such evident preoccupation of mind that it was not at first discovered that the Judge had his already on. This raised a laugh, as did also a clumsy stumble of Union Mills against the pork barrel, although that gentleman took refuge from his confusion and secured a decent retreat by a gross exaggeration of his lameness, as he limped after the Right Bower. The Judge whistled feebly. The Left Bower, in a more ambitious effort to impart a certain gayety to his exit, stopped on the threshold and said, as if in arch confidence to his companions, "Darned if the Old Man don't look two inches higher since he became proprietor," laughed patronizingly, and vanished.

If the newly made proprietor had increased in stature, he had not otherwise changed his demeanor. He remained in the same attitude until the last figure disappeared behind the fringe of buckeye that hid the distant highway. Then he walked slowly to the fireplace, and, leaning against the chimney, kicked the *dying embers* together with his foot. Something

dropped and spattered in the film of hot ashes. Surely the rain had not yet ceased!

His high color had already fled except for a spot on either cheek-bone that lent a brightness to his eyes. He glanced around the cabin. It looked familiar and yet strange. Rather, it looked strange *because* still familiar, and therefore incongruous with the new atmosphere that surrounded it — discordant with the echo of their last meeting, and painfully accenting the change. There were the four "bunks," or sleeping berths, of his companions, each still bearing some traces of the individuality of its late occupant with a dumb loyalty that seemed to make their light-hearted defection monstrous. In the dead ashes of the Judge's pipe, scattered on his shelf, still lived his old fire; in the whittled and carved edges of the Left Bower's bunk still were the memories of bygone days of delicious indolence; in the bullet-holes clustered round a knot of one of the beams there was still the record of the Right Bower's old-time skill and practice; in the few engravings of female loveliness stuck upon each headboard there were the proofs of their old extravagant devotion — all a mute protest to the change.

He remembered how, a fatherless, truant schoolboy, he had drifted into their adventurous, nomadic life, itself a life of grown-up truancy like his own, and became one of that gypsy family. How they had taken the place of relations and household in his boyish fancy, filling it with the unsubstantial pageantry of a child's play at grown-up existence, he knew only too well. But how, from being a pet and protégé, he had gradually and unconsciously asserted his own individuality and taken upon his younger shoulders not only a poet's keen appreciation of that life, but its actual responsibilities and half-childish burdens, he *never suspected*. He had fondly believed that he was

a neophyte in their ways, a novice in their charming faith and indolent creed, and they had encouraged it; now their renunciation of that faith could only be an excuse for a renunciation of *him*. The poetry that had for two years invested the material and sometimes even mean details of their existence was too much a part of himself to be lightly dispelled. The lesson of those ingenuous moralists failed, as such lessons are apt to fail; their discipline provoked but did not subdue; a rising indignation, stirred by a sense of injury, mounted to his cheek and eyes. It was slow to come, but was none the less violent that it had been preceded by the benumbing shock of shame and pride.

I hope I shall not prejudice the reader's sympathies if my duty as a simple chronicler compels me to state, therefore, that the sober second thought of this gentle poet was to burn down the cabin on the spot with all its contents. This yielded to a milder counsel — waiting for the return of the party, challenging the Right Bower, a duel to the death, perhaps himself the victim, with the crushing explanation *in extremis*, "It seems we are *one* too many. No matter; it is settled now. Farewell!" Dimly remembering, however, that there was something of this in the last well-worn novel they had read together, and that his antagonist might recognize it, or even worse, anticipate it himself, the idea was quickly rejected. Besides, the opportunity for an apotheosis of self-sacrifice was past. Nothing remained now but to refuse the proffered bribe of claim and cabin by letter, for he must not wait their return. He tore a leaf from a blotted diary, begun and abandoned long since, and essayed to write. Scrawl after scrawl was torn up, until his fury had cooled down to a frigid third personality. "Mr. John Ford regrets to inform his late partners that their tender of house, of furniture," however, seemed too inconsistent with the pork-

barrel table he was writing on ; a more eloquent renunciation of their offer became frivolous and idiotic from a caricature of Union Mills, label and all, that appeared suddenly on the other side of the leaf ; and when he at last indited a satisfactory and impassioned exposition of his feelings, the legible addendum of " Oh, ain't you glad you 're out of the wilderness ! " — the forgotten first line of a popular song, which no scratching would erase — seemed too like an ironical postscript to be thought of for a moment. He threw aside his pen, and cast the discordant record of past foolish pastime into the dead ashes of the hearth.

How quiet it was ! With the cessation of the rain the wind too had gone down, and scarcely a breath of air came through the open door. He walked to the threshold, and gazed on the hushed prospect. In this listless attitude he was faintly conscious of a distant reverberation, a mere phantom of sound, — perhaps the explosion of a distant blast in the hills, — that left the silence more marked and oppressive. As he turned again into the cabin a change seemed to have come over it. It already looked old and decayed. The loneliness of years of desertion seemed to have taken possession of it ; the atmosphere of dry rot was in the beams and rafters. To his excited fancy the few disordered blankets and articles of clothing seemed dropping to pieces ; in one of the bunks there was a hideous resemblance in the longitudinal heap of clothing to a withered and mummied corpse. So it might look in after-years when some passing stranger — But he stopped. A dread of the place was beginning to creep over him ; a dread of the days to come, when the monotonous sunshine should lay bare the loneliness of these walls ; the long, long days of endless blue and cloudless, overhanging solitude ; summer days when *the wearying*, incessant trade-winds should sing around

that empty shell and voice its desolation. He gathered together hastily a few articles that were especially his own — rather that the free communion of the camp, from indifference or accident, had left wholly to him. He hesitated for a moment over his rifle, but, scrupulous in his wounded pride, turned away and left the familiar weapon that in the dark days had so often provided the dinner or breakfast of the little household. Candor compels me to state that his equipment was not large nor eminently practical. His scant pack was a light weight for even his young shoulders, but I fear he thought more of getting away from the Past than providing for the Future.

With this vague but sole purpose he left the cabin, and almost mechanically turned his steps towards the creek he had crossed that morning. He knew that by this route he would avoid meeting his companions; its difficulties and circuitousness would exercise his feverish limbs and give him time for reflection. He had determined to leave the claim, but whence he had not yet considered. He reached the bank of the creek where he had stood two hours before; it seemed to him two years. He looked curiously at his reflection in one of the broad pools of overflow, and fancied he looked older. He watched the rush and outset of the turbid current hurrying to meet the South Fork, and to eventually lose itself in the yellow Sacramento. Even in his preoccupation he was impressed with a likeness to himself and his companions in this flood that had burst its peaceful boundaries. In the drifting fragments of one of their forgotten flumes washed from the bank, he fancied he saw an omen of the disintegration and decay of the Lone Star claim.

The strange hush in the air that he had noticed before — a calm so inconsistent with that hour and the season as to seem portentous — became more marked

in contrast to the feverish rush of the turbulent watercourse. A few clouds lazily huddled in the west apparently had gone to rest with the sun on beds of somnolent poppies. There was a gleam as of golden water everywhere along the horizon, washing out the cold snow-peaks, and drowning even the rising moon. The creek caught it here and there, until, in grim irony, it seemed to bear their broken sluice-boxes and useless engines on the very Pactolian stream they had been hopefully created to direct and carry. But by some peculiar trick of the atmosphere the perfect plenitude of that golden sunset glory was lavished on the rugged sides and tangled crest of the Lone Star Mountain. That isolated peak, the landmark of their claim, the gaunt monument of their folly, transfigured in the evening splendor, kept its radiance unquenched long after the glow had fallen from the encompassing skies ; and when at last the rising moon, step by step, put out the fires along the winding valley and plains, and crept up the bosky sides of the cañon, the vanishing sunset was lost only to reappear as a golden crown.

The eyes of the young man were fixed upon it with more than a momentary picturesque interest. It had been the favorite ground of his prospecting exploits, its lowest flank had been scarred in the old enthusiastic days with hydraulic engines, or pierced with shafts, but its central position in the claim and its superior height had always given it a commanding view of the extent of their valley and its approaches, and it was this practical preëminence that alone attracted him at that moment. He knew that from its crest he would be able to distinguish the figures of his companions, as they crossed the valley near the cabin, in the growing moonlight. Thus he could avoid encountering them on his way to the highroad, and *yet see them*, perhaps, for the last time. Even in his

sense of injury there was a strange satisfaction in the thought.

The ascent was toilsome, but familiar. All along the dim trail he was accompanied by gentler memories of the past, that seemed, like the faint odor of spiced leaves and fragrant grasses wet with the rain and crushed beneath his ascending tread, to exhale the sweeter perfume in his effort to subdue or rise above them. There was the thicket of manzanita, where they had broken noonday bread together; here was the rock beside their maiden shafts, where they had poured a wild libation in boyish enthusiasm of success; and here the ledge where their first flag, a red shirt heroically sacrificed, was displayed from a long-handled shovel to the gaze of admirers below. When he at last reached the summit, the mysterious hush was still in the air, as if in breathless sympathy with his expedition. In the west, the plain was faintly illuminated, but disclosed no moving figures. He turned towards the rising moon, and moved slowly to the eastern edge. Suddenly he stopped. Another step would have been his last! He stood upon the crumbling edge of a precipice. A landslip had taken place on the eastern flank, leaving the gaunt ribs and fleshless bones of Lone Star Mountain bare in the moonlight. He understood now the strange rumble and reverberation he had heard; he understood now the strange hush of bird and beast in brake and thicket!

Although a single rapid glance convinced him that the slide had taken place in an unfrequented part of the mountain, above an inaccessible cañon, and reflection assured him his companions could not have reached that distance when it took place, a feverish impulse led him to descend a few rods in the track of the avalanche. The frequent recurrence of outcrop and angle *made this comparatively easy*. Here he called aloud:

the feeble echo of his own voice seemed only a dull impertinence to the significant silence. He turned to reascend; the furrowed flank of the mountain before him lay full in the moonlight. To his excited fancy a dozen luminous starlike points in the rocky crevices started into life as he faced them. Throwing his arm over the ledge above him, he supported himself for a moment by what appeared to be a projection of the solid rock. It trembled slightly. As he raised himself to its level, his heart stopped beating. It was simply a fragment detached from the outcrop, lying loosely on the ledge but upholding him by *its own weight only*. He examined it with trembling fingers; the encumbering soil fell from its sides and left its smoothed and worn protuberances glistening in the moonlight. It was virgin gold!

Looking back upon that moment afterwards, he remembered that he was not dazed, dazzled, or startled. It did not come to him as a discovery or an accident, a stroke of chance or a caprice of fortune. He saw it all in that supreme moment; Nature had worked out their poordeduction. What their feeble engines had essayed spasmodically and helplessly against the curtain of soil that hid the treasure, the elements had achieved with mightier but more patient forces. The slow sapping of the winter rains had loosened the soil from the auriferous rock, even while the swollen stream was carrying their impotent and shattered engines to the sea. What mattered that his single arm could not lift the treasure he had found; what mattered that to unfix those glittering stars would still tax both skill and patience! The work was done, the goal was reached! Even his boyish impatience was content with that. He rose slowly to his feet, unstrapped his long-handled shovel from his back, secured it in the crevice, and quietly regained the summit.

It was all his own! His own by right of discovery under the law of the land and without accepting a favor from *them*. He recalled even the fact that it was *his* prospecting on the mountain that first suggested the existence of gold in the outcrop and the use of the hydraulic. *He* had never abandoned that belief, whatever the others had done. He dwelt somewhat indignantly to himself on this circumstance, and half unconsciously faced defiantly towards the plain below. But it was sleeping peacefully in the full sight of the moon, without life or motion. He looked at the stars, it was still far from midnight. His companions had no doubt long since returned to the cabin to prepare for their midnight journey. They were discussing him, perhaps laughing at him, or worse, pitying him and his bargain. Yet here was his bargain! A slight laugh he gave vent to here startled him a little, it sounded so hard and so unmirthful, and so unlike, as he oddly fancied, what he really *thought*. But *what* did he think?

Nothing mean or revengeful; no, they never would say *that*. When he had taken out all the surface gold and put the mine in working order, he would send them each a draft for a thousand dollars. Of course, if they were ever ill or poor he would do more. One of the first, the very first things he should do would be to send them each a handsome gun, and tell them that he only asked in return the old-fashioned rifle that once was his. Looking back at the moment in after-years, he wondered that, with this exception, he made no plans for his own future, or the way he should dispose of his newly acquired wealth. This was the more singular as it had been the custom of the five partners to lie awake at night, audibly comparing with each other what they would do in case they made *a strike*. He remembered how, Alnaschar-like, they

nearly separated once over a difference in the disposal of a hundred thousand dollars that they never had, nor expected to have. He remembered how Union Mills always began his career as a millionaire by a "square meal" at Delmonico's; how the Right Bower's initial step was always a trip home "to see his mother"; how the Left Bower would immediately placate the parents of his beloved with priceless gifts (it may be parenthetically remarked that the parents and the beloved one were as hypothetical as the fortune); and how the Judge would make his first start as a capitalist by breaking a certain faro bank in Sacramento. He himself had been equally eloquent in extravagant fancy in those penniless days,—he who now was quite cold and impassive beside the more extravagant reality.

How different it might have been! If they had only waited a day longer! if they had only broken their resolves to him kindly and parted in good will! How he would long ere this have rushed to greet them with the joyful news! How they would have danced around it, sung themselves hoarse, laughed down their enemies, and run up the flag triumphantly on the summit of the Lone Star Mountain! How they would have crowned him, the "Old Man," "the hero of the camp!" How he would have told them the whole story; how some strange instinct had impelled him to ascend the summit, and how another step on that summit would have precipitated him into the cañon! And how — But what if somebody else, Union Mills or the Judge, had been the first discoverer? Might they not have meanly kept the secret from him; have selfishly helped themselves, and done —

"What *you* are doing now."

The hot blood rushed to his cheek, as if a strange voice were at his ear. For a moment he could not

believe that it came from his own pale lips until he found himself speaking. He rose to his feet, tingling with shame, and began hurriedly to descend the mountain.

He would go to them, tell them of his discovery, let them give him his share, and leave them forever. It was the only thing to be done — strange that he had not thought of it at once. Yet it was hard, very hard and cruel, to be forced to meet them again. What had he done to suffer this mortification? For a moment he actually hated this vulgar treasure that had forever buried under its gross ponderability the light and careless past, and utterly crushed out the poetry of their old, indolent, happy existence.

He was sure to find them waiting at the Cross-Roads where the coach came past. It was three miles away, yet he could get there in time if he hastened. It was a wise and practical conclusion of his evening's work, a lame and impotent conclusion to his evening's indignation. No matter. They would perhaps at first think he had come to weakly follow them, perhaps they would at first doubt his story. No matter. He bit his lips to keep down the foolish rising tears, but still went blindly forward.

He saw not the beautiful night, cradled in the dark hills, swathed in luminous mists, and hushed in the awe of its own loveliness! Here and there the moon had laid her calm face on lake and overflow, and gone to sleep embracing them, until the whole plain seemed to be lifted into infinite quiet. Walking on as in a dream, the black, impenetrable barriers of skirting thickets opened and gave way to vague distances that it appeared impossible to reach, dim vistas that seemed unapproachable. Gradually he seemed himself to become a part of the mysterious night. He was becoming as pulseless, as calm, as passionless.

What was that? A shot in the direction of the cabin! yet so faint, so echoless, so ineffective in the vast silence, that he would have thought it his fancy but for the strange instinctive jar upon his sensitive nerves. Was it an accident, or was it an intentional signal to him? He stopped; it was not repeated; the silence reasserted itself, but this time with an ominous deathlike suggestion. A sudden and terrible thought crossed his mind. He cast aside his pack and all encumbering weight, took a deep breath, lowered his head, and darted like a deer in the direction of the challenge.

II

The exodus of the seceding partners of the Lone Star claim had been scarcely an imposing one. For the first five minutes after quitting the cabin the procession was straggling and vagabond. Unwonted exertion had exaggerated the lameness of some, and feebleness of moral purpose had predisposed the others to obtrusive musical exhibition. Union Mills limped and whistled with affected abstraction; the Judge whistled and limped with affected earnestness. The Right Bower led the way with some show of definite design; the Left Bower followed with his hands in his pockets. The two feebler natures, drawn together in unconscious sympathy, looked vaguely at each other for support.

"You see," said the Judge suddenly, as if triumphantly concluding an argument, "there ain't anything better for a young fellow than independence. Nature, so to speak, points the way. Look at the animals."

"There's a skunk hereabouts," said Union Mills, who was supposed to be gifted with aristocratically sensitive nostrils, "within ten miles of this place; like *as not* crossing the Ridge. It's always my luck to

happen out just at such times. I don't see the necessity anyhow of trapesing round the claim now, if we calculate to leave it to-night."

Both men waited to observe if the suggestion was taken up by the Right and Left Bowers moodily plodding ahead. No response following, the Judge shamelessly abandoned his companion.

"You would n't stand snoopin' round instead of lettin' the Old Man get used to the idea alone? No; I could see all along that he was takin' it in, takin' it in kindly but slowly, and I reckoned the best thing for us to do was to git up and git until he'd got round it." The Judge's voice was slightly raised for the benefit of the two before him.

"Did n't he say," remarked the Right Bower, stopping suddenly and facing the others, "did n't he say that that new trader was goin' to let him have some provisions anyway?"

Union Mills turned appealingly to the Judge; that gentleman was forced to reply, "Yes; I remember distinctly he said it. It was one of the things I was particular about on his account," responded the Judge, with the air of having arranged it all himself with the new trader. "I remember I was easier in my mind about it."

"But did n't he say," queried the Left Bower, also stopping short, "suthin' about its being contingent on our doing some work on the race?"

The Judge turned for support to Union Mills, who, however, under the hollow pretense of preparing for a long conference, had luxuriously seated himself on a stump. The Judge sat down also, and replied hesitatingly, "Well, yes! Us or him."

"Us or him," repeated the Right Bower, with gloomy irony. "And you ain't quite clear in your mind, are you, if *you* have n't done the work already?"

You're just killing yourself with this spontaneous, promiscuous, and premature overwork; that's what's the matter with you."

"I reckon I heard somebody say suthin' about its being a Chinaman's three-day job," interpolated the Left Bower, with equal irony; "but I ain't quite clear in my mind about that."

"It'll be a sorter distraction for the Old Man," said Union Mills feebly, — "kinder take his mind off his loneliness."

Nobody taking the least notice of the remark, Union Mills stretched out his legs more comfortably and took out his pipe. He had scarcely done so when the Right Bower, wheeling suddenly, set off in the direction of the creek. The Left Bower, after a slight pause, followed without a word. The Judge, wisely conceiving it better to join the stronger party, ran feebly after him, and left Union Mills to bring up a weak and vacillating rear.

Their course, diverging from Lone Star Mountain, led them now directly to the bend of the creek, the base of their old ineffectual operations. Here was the beginning of the famous tail-race that skirted the new trader's claim, and then lost its way in a swampy hollow. It was choked with débris; a thin, yellow stream that once ran through it seemed to have stopped work when they did, and gone into greenish liquidation.

They had scarcely spoken during this brief journey, and had received no other explanation from the Right Bower, who led them, than that afforded by his mute example when he reached the race. Leaping into it without a word, he at once began to clear away the broken timbers and driftwood. Fired by the spectacle of what appeared to be a new and utterly frivolous game, the men gayly leaped after him, and were soon *engaged in a fascinating struggle with the impeded*

race. The Judge forgot his lameness in springing over a broken sluice-box; Union Mills forgot his whistle in a happy imitation of a Chinese coolie's song. Nevertheless, after ten minutes of this mild dissipation, the pastime flagged; Union Mills was beginning to rub his leg, when a distant rumble shook the earth. The men looked at each other; the diversion was complete; a languid discussion of the probabilities of its being an earthquake or a blast followed, in the midst of which the Right Bower, who was working a little in advance of the others, uttered a warning cry and leaped from the race. His companions had barely time to follow before a sudden and inexplicable rise in the waters of the creek sent a swift irruption of the flood through the race. In an instant its choked and impeded channel was cleared, the race was free, and the scattered débris of logs and timber floated upon its easy current. Quick to take advantage of this labor-saving phenomenon, the Lone Star partners sprang into the water, and by disentangling and directing the eddying fragments completed their work.

"The Old Man oughter been here to see this," said the Left Bower; "it's just one o' them climaxes of poetic justice he's always huntin' up. It's easy to see what's happened. One o' them high-toned shrimps over in the Excelsior claim has put a blast in too near the creek. He's tumbled the bank into the creek, and sent the backwater down here just to wash out our race. That's what I call poetical retribution."

"And who was it advised us to dam the creek below the race and make it do the thing?" asked the Right Bower moodily.

"That was one of the Old Man's ideas, I reckon," said the Left Bower dubiously.

"And you remember," broke in the Judge with animation, "I allus said, 'Go slow, go slow. You just

hold on, and suthin' will happen.' And," he added triumphantly, "you see suthin' *has* happened. I don't want to take credit to myself, but I reckoned on them Excelsior boys bein' fools, and took the chances."

"And what if I happen to know that the Excelsior boys ain't blastin' to-day?" said the Right Bower sarcastically.

As the Judge had evidently based his hypothesis on the alleged fact of a blast, he deftly evaded the point. "I ain't sayin' the Old Man's head ain't level on some things; he wants a little more sabe of the world. He's improved a good deal in euchre lately, and in poker — well! he's got that sorter dreamy, listenin'-to-the-angels kind o' way that you can't exactly tell whether he's bluffin' or has got a full hand. Has n't he?" he asked, appealing to Union Mills.

But that gentleman, who had been watching the dark face of the Right Bower, preferred to take what he believed to be his cue from him. "That ain't the question," he said virtuously; "we ain't takin' this step to make a card-sharp out of him. We're not doin' Chinamen's work in this race to-day for that. No, sir! We're teachin' him to paddle his own canoe." Not finding the sympathetic response he looked for in the Right Bower's face, he turned to the Left.

"I reckon we were teachin' him our canoe was too full," was the Left Bower's unexpected reply. "That's about the size of it."

The Right Bower shot a rapid glance under his brows at his brother. The latter, with his hands in his pockets, stared unconsciously at the rushing water, and then quietly turned away. The Right Bower followed him. "Are you goin' back on us?" he asked.

"Are *you*?" responded the other.

"No!"

"*No*, then, it is," returned the Left Bower quietly.

The elder brother hesitated in half-angry embarrassment.

"Then what did you mean by saying we reckoned our canoe was too full?"

"Was n't that our idea?" returned the Left Bower indifferently. Confounded by this practical expression of his own unformulated good intentions, the Right Bower was staggered.

"Speakin' of the Old Man," broke in the Judge, with characteristic infelicity, "I reckon he 'll sort o' miss us, times like these. We were allers runnin' him and bedevilin' him, after work, just to get him excited and amusin', and he 'll kinder miss that sort o' stimulin'. I reckon we 'll miss it too, somewhat. Don't you remember, boys, the night we put up that little sell on him and made him believe we 'd struck it rich in the bank of the creek, and got him so conceited he wanted to go off and settle all our debts at once?"

"And how I came bustin' into the cabin with a pan full of iron pyrites and black sand," chuckled Union Mills, continuing the reminiscences, "and how them big gray eyes of his nearly bulged out of his head. Well, it's some satisfaction to know we did our duty by the young fellow even in those little things." He turned for confirmation of their general disinterestedness to the Right Bower, but he was already striding away, uneasily conscious of the lazy following of the Left Bower, like a laggard conscience at his back. This movement again threw Union Mills and the Judge into feeble complicity in the rear, as the procession slowly straggled homeward from the creek.

Night had fallen. Their way lay through the shadow of Lone Star Mountain, deepened here and there by the slight, bosky ridges that, starting from its base, crept across the plain like vast roots of its swelling trunk. The shadows were growing blacker as the moon

began to assert itself over the rest of the valley, when the Right Bower halted suddenly on one of these ridges. The Left Bower lounged up to him, and stopped also, while the two others came up and completed the group.

"There's no light in the shanty," said the Right Bower in a low voice, half to himself and half in answer to their inquiring attitude. The men followed the direction of his finger. In the distance the black outline of the Lone Star cabin stood out distinctly in the illumined space. There was the black, sightless, external glitter of moonlight on its two windows that seemed to reflect its dim vacancy, empty alike of light and warmth and motion.

"That's sing'lar," said the Judge in an awed whisper.

The Left Bower, by simply altering the position of his hands in his trousers' pockets, managed to suggest that he knew perfectly the meaning of it, had always known it; but that being now, so to speak, in the hands of Fate, he was callous to it. This much, at least, the elder brother read in his attitude. But anxiety at that moment was the controlling impulse of the Right Bower, as a certain superstitious remorse was the instinct of the two others; and without heeding the cynic, the three started at a rapid pace for the cabin.

They reached it silently, as the moon, now riding high in the heavens, seemed to touch it with the tender grace and hushed repose of a tomb. It was with something of this feeling that the Right Bower softly pushed open the door; it was with something of this dread that the two others lingered on the threshold, until the Right Bower, after vainly trying to stir the dead embers on the hearth into life with his foot, struck a match and lit their solitary candle. Its flickering light *revealed the familiar interior unchanged in aught but*

one thing. The bunk that the Old Man had occupied was stripped of its blankets; the few cheap ornaments and photographs were gone; the rude poverty of the bare boards and scant pallet looked up at them unrelieved by the bright face and gracious youth that had once made them tolerable. In the grim irony of that exposure, their own penury was doubly conscious. The little knapsack, the tea-cup, and coffee-pot that had hung near his bed were gone also. The most indignant protest, the most pathetic of the letters he had composed and rejected, whose torn fragments still littered the floor, could never have spoken with the eloquence of this empty space! The men exchanged no words; the solitude of the cabin, instead of drawing them together, seemed to isolate each one in selfish distrust of the others. Even the unthinking garrulity of Union Mills and the Judge was checked. A moment later, when the Left Bower entered the cabin, his presence was scarcely noticed.

The silence was broken by a joyous exclamation from the Judge. He had discovered the Old Man's rifle in the corner, where it had been at first overlooked. "He ain't gone yet, gentlemen — for yer's his rifle," he broke in, with a feverish return of volubility, and a high excited falsetto. "He would n't have left this behind. No! I knowed it from the first. He's just outside a bit, foraging for wood and water. No, sir! Coming along here I said to Union Mills — did n't I? — 'Bet your life the Old Man's not far off, even if he ain't in the cabin.' Why, the moment I stepped foot —"

"And I said coming along," interrupted Union Mills, with equally reviving mendacity, "'Like as not he's hangin' round yer and lyin' low just to give us a surprise.' He! ho!"

"He's gone for good, and he left that rifle here on

purpose," said the Left Bower in a low voice, taking the weapon almost tenderly in his hands.

"Drop it, then!" said the Right Bower. The voice was that of his brother, but suddenly changed with passion. The two other partners drew back in alarm.

"I'll not leave it here for the first comer," said the Left Bower calmly, "because we've been fools, and he, too. It's too good a weapon for that."

"Drop it, I say!" said the Right Bower, with a savage stride towards him.

The younger brother brought the rifle to a half charge with a white face but a steady eye.

"Stop where you are!" he said collectedly. "Don't row with *me*, because you have n't either the grit to stick to your ideas or the heart to confess them wrong. We've followed your lead, and — here we are! The camp's broken up — the Old Man's gone — and we're going. And as for the d——d rifle —"

"Drop it, do you hear!" shouted the Right Bower, clinging to that one idea with the blind pertinacity of rage and a losing cause. "Drop it!"

The Left Bower drew back, but his brother had seized the barrel with both hands. There was a momentary struggle, a flash through the half-lighted cabin, and a shattering report. The two men fell back from each other; the rifle dropped on the floor between them.

The whole thing was over so quickly that the other two partners had not had time to obey their common impulse to separate them, and consequently even now could scarcely understand what had passed. It was over so quickly that the two actors themselves walked back to their places, scarcely realizing their own act.

A dead silence followed. The Judge and Union Mills looked at each other in dazed astonishment, *and then nervously set about their former habits, ap-*

parently in that fatuous belief common to such natures, that they were ignoring a painful situation. The Judge drew the barrel towards him, picked up the cards, and began mechanically to "make a patience," on which Union Mills gazed with ostentatious interest, but with eyes furtively conscious of the rigid figure of the Right Bower by the chimney and the abstracted face of the Left Bower at the door. Ten minutes had passed in this occupation, the Judge and Union Mills conversing in the furtive whispers of children unavoidably but fascinatedly present at a family quarrel, when a light step was heard upon the crackling brushwood outside, and the bright panting face of the Old Man appeared upon the threshold. There was a shout of joy; in another moment he was half buried in the bosom of the Right Bower's shirt, half dragged into the lap of the Judge, upsetting the barrel, and completely encompassed by the Left Bower and Union Mills. With the enthusiastic utterance of his name the spell was broken.

Happily unconscious of the previous excitement that had provoked this spontaneous unanimity of greeting, the Old Man, equally relieved, at once broke into a feverish announcement of his discovery. He painted the details, with, I fear, a slight exaggeration of coloring, due partly to his own excitement, and partly to justify their own. But he was strangely conscious that these bankrupt men appeared less elated with their personal interest in their stroke of fortune than with his own success. "I told you he'd do it," said the Judge, with a reckless unscrupulousness of the statement that carried everybody with it; "look at him! the game little pup." "Oh, no! he ain't the right breed, is he?" echoed Union Mills with arch irony, while the Right and Left Bower, *grasping either hand*, pressed a proud but silent greeting

that was half new to him, but wholly delicious. It was not without difficulty that he could at last prevail upon them to return with him to the scene of his discovery, or even then restrain them from attempting to carry him thither on their shoulders on the plea of his previous prolonged exertions. Once only there was a momentary embarrassment. "Then you fired that shot to bring me back?" said the Old Man gratefully. In the awkward silence that followed, the hands of the two brothers sought and grasped each other penitently. "Yes," interposed the Judge, with delicate tact, "ye see the Right and Left Bower almost quarreled to see which should be the first to fire for ye. I disremember which did" — "I never touched the trigger," said the Left Bower hastily. With a hurried backward kick, the Judge resumed, "It went off sorter spontaneous."

The difference in the sentiment of the procession that once more issued from the Lone Star cabin did not fail to show itself in each individual partner according to his temperament. The subtle tact of Union Mills, however, in expressing an awakened respect for their fortunate partner by addressing him, as if unconsciously, as "Mr. Ford" was at first discomposing, but even this was forgotten in their breathless excitement as they neared the base of the mountain. When they had crossed the creek the Right Bower stopped reflectively.

"You say you heard the slide come down before you left the cabin?" he said, turning to the Old Man.

"Yes; but I did not know then what it was. It was about an hour and a half after you left," was the reply.

"Then look here, boys," continued the Right Bower with superstitious exultation; "it was the *slide* that tumbled into the creek, overflowed it, and helped *us* clear out the race!"

It seemed so clear that Providence had taken the partners of the Lone Star directly in hand that they faced the toilsome ascent of the mountain with the assurance of conquerors. They paused only on the summit to allow the Old Man to lead the way to the slope that held their treasure. He advanced cautiously to the edge of the crumbling cliff, stopped, looked bewildered, advanced again, and then remained white and immovable. In an instant the Right Bower was at his side.

"Is anything the matter? Don't — don't look so, Old Man, for God's sake!"

The Old Man pointed to the dull, smooth, black side of the mountain, without a crag, break, or protuberance, and said with ashen lips, —

"It's gone!"

And it was gone! A *second* slide had taken place, stripping the flank of the mountain, and burying the treasure and the weak implement that had marked its side deep under a chaos of rock and débris at its base.

"Thank God!" The blank faces of his companions turned quickly to the Right Bower. "Thank God!" he repeated, with his arm round the neck of the Old Man. "Had he stayed behind he would have been buried too." He paused, and, pointing solemnly to the depths below, said, "And thank God for showing us where we may yet labor for it in hope and patience like honest men."

The men silently bowed their heads and slowly descended the mountain. But when they had reached the plain one of them called out to the others to watch a star that seemed to be rising and moving towards them over the hushed and sleeping valley.

"It's only the stage-coach, boys," said the Left Bower, smiling; "the coach that was to take us away."

In the security of their new-found fraternity they resolved to wait and see it pass. As it swept by with flash of light, beat of hoofs, and jingle of harness the only real presence in the dreamy landscape, the driver shouted a hoarse greeting to the phantom partners, audible only to the Judge, who was nearest the vehicle.

"Did you hear — *did* you hear what he said, boys?" he gasped, turning to his companions. "No? Shake hands all round, boys! God bless you all, boys! To think we did n't know it all this while!"

"Know what?"

"Merry Christmas!"

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

Beginning with the word "enthusiasm," which occurs twice in the first paragraph, build up in your imagination a picture of these miners at work. Contrast with this the effect of their failure. How does the author help you to realize their "feeble failure" by giving description with definite details? Why does the use of nicknames add interest? In the description of the four men, what is "ludicrous" and what "pathetic"? In the following conversation trace the bitter feeling of resentment against the Old Man. What descriptive words of manner and action show the intensity of feeling during the "solitaire"?

What spirit and traits of character are developed in the Old Man as he talks to his partners? What impression do you get of the part he had played in the life of the camp? Did the others have good reasons for their feeling against him? Why? What prompted this feeling? The departure of the four partners is amusing. Note their hypocritical attitude of interest in his welfare, their absurd lying, and their ridiculous exit from the cabin.

As you read about the Old Man left alone in the cabin, what pictures do you get of the life the partners had lived *there*? What varying moods of feeling came to the Old

Man? What traits of his character appear? How is description used to arouse and intensify feeling? As he is on his way up the mountain, what pleasing pictures do you have of the scene about him?

Trace the attempts of each of the deserting partners to justify himself. Note the keenness of retort as one seeks to place the blame upon another. What motives prompted the contest over the rifle? Do the events after the return of the Old Man satisfy you? Why?

Technique

Introduction. Compare the length of this introduction with those of the other stories that you have read. What definite purpose does description of the *scene* and *characters* serve? How is *interest aroused* in the characters and the action? Where does the *main theme* appear?

Plot. In what way do conditions, opinions, prejudice, and chance combine to start the action? How did a mere notion of the Old Man's together with the landslide prepare for the concluding action? How did the unexpected situation in which he found himself reveal character and direct the part he was to play in the *climax*? Where did the sense of fair dealing with the Old Man assert itself in the minds of the deserters and lead to action *counter* to their determined purpose? How did the landslide link the fate of the Old Man with that of his former partners? On their arrival in the cabin, what prompts their better sentiments and intensifies *suspense*? How does the accidental discharging of the gun act as the *resolving force* in the plot?

Character. In a good story the characters should be unique and original, and presented in a manner that attracts attention at once. Refer to passages where these requirements are met. The presentation of the characters through action and speech and by attitude and tone of voice is well worth study. From this point of view compare this story with others that you have read.

Background. A less skillful writer than the author of this story might have given the entire description of the scene in the opening paragraphs. On the other hand, it is brought in at points closely associated with the action and the emotions of the characters. Make a careful study of *such passages* and show how effective this method is.

THE BIRTHMARK

By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

IN the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who not long before our story opens had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one. He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife. In those days when the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. We know not whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over Nature. He had devoted himself, however, too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weaned from them by any second passion. His love for his young wife might prove the stronger of the two; but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science, and uniting the strength of *the latter to his own*.

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke.

"Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?"

"No, indeed," said she, smiling; but perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she blushed deeply. "To tell you the truth it has been so often called a charm that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so."

"Ah, upon another face perhaps it might," replied her husband; "but never on yours. No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection."

"Shocks you, my husband!" cried Georgiana, deeply hurt; at first reddening with momentary anger, but then bursting into tears. "Then why did you take me from my mother's side? You cannot love what shocks you!"

To explain this conversation it must be mentioned that in the centre of Georgiana's left cheek there was a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her complexion — a healthy though delicate bloom — the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the *triumphant* rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek.

with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness. Its shape bore not a little similarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pygmy size. Georgiana's lovers were wont to say that some fairy at her birth hour had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. It must not be concealed, however, that the impression wrought by this fairy sign manual varied exceedingly, according to the difference of temperament in the beholders. Some fastidious persons — but they were exclusively of her own sex — affirmed that the bloody hand, as they chose to call it, quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana's beauty, and rendered her countenance even hideous. But it would be as reasonable to say that one of those small blue stains which sometimes occur in the purest statuary marble would convert the Eve of Powers to a monster. Masculine observers, if the birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness without the semblance of a flaw. After his marriage, — for he thought little or nothing of the matter before, — Aylmer discovered that this was the case with himself.

Had she been less beautiful, — if Envy's self could have found aught else to sneer at, — he might have felt his affection heightened by the prettiness of this mimic hand, now vaguely portrayed, now lost, now stealing forth again and glimmering to and fro with *every pulse of emotion that throbbed within her heart,*

but seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

At all the seasons which should have been their happiest, he invariably and without intending it, nay, in spite of a purpose to the contrary, reverted to this one disastrous topic. Trifling as it at first appeared, it so connected itself with innumerable trains of thought and modes of feeling that it became the central point of all. With the morning twilight Aylmer opened his eyes upon his wife's face and recognized the symbol of imperfection; and when they sat together at the evening hearth his eyes wandered stealthily to her cheek, and beheld, flickering with the blaze of the wood fire, the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped. Georgiana soon learned to shudder at his gaze. It needed but a glance with the peculiar expression that his face often wore to change the roses of her cheek into a deathlike paleness, amid which the crimson hand was brought strongly out, like a bass-relief of ruby on the whitest marble.

Late one night when the lights were growing dim, so as hardly to betray the stain on the poor wife's cheek, she herself, for the first time, voluntarily took up the subject.

"Do you remember, my dear Aylmer," said she, with a feeble attempt at a smile, "have you any recollection of a dream last night about this odious hand?"

"None! none whatever!" replied Aylmer, starting; but then he added, in a dry, cold tone, affected for the sake of concealing the real depth of his emotion, "I might well dream of it; for before I fell asleep it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy."

"And you did dream of it?" continued Georgiana, hastily; for she dreaded lest a gush of tears should interrupt what she had to say. "A terrible dream! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget this one expression? — 'It is in her heart now; we must have it out!' Reflect, my husband; for by all means I would have you recall that dream."

The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one. Aylmer now remembered his dream. He had fancied himself with his servant Aminadab, attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark; but the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana's heart; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away.

When the dream had shaped itself perfectly in his memory, Aylmer sat in his wife's presence with a guilty feeling. Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to

which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments. Until now he had not been aware of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and of the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace.

"Aylmer," resumed Georgiana, solemnly, "I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal birthmark. Perhaps its removal may cause cureless deformity; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Again: do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little hand which was laid upon me before I came into the world?"

"Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon the subject," hastily interrupted Aylmer. "I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal."

"If there be the remotest possibility of it," continued Georgiana, "let the attempt be made at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust, — life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life! You have deep science. All the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of two small fingers? Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?"

"Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife," cried Aylmer, rapturously, "doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought — thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgiana, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully competent to render this dear cheek as fault-

less as its fellow; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work! Even Pygmalion, when his sculptured woman assumed life, felt not greater ecstasy than mine will be."

"It is resolved, then," said Georgiana, faintly smiling. "And, Aylmer, spare me not, though you should find the birthmark take refuge in my heart at last."

Her husband tenderly kissed her cheek — her right cheek — not that which bore the impress of the crimson hand.

The next day Aylmer apprised his wife of a plan that he had formed whereby he might have opportunity for the intense thought and constant watchfulness which the proposed operation would require; while Georgiana, likewise, would enjoy the perfect repose essential to its success. They were to seclude themselves in the extensive apartments occupied by Aylmer as a laboratory, and where, during his toilsome youth, he had made discoveries in the elemental powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud region and of the profoundest mines; he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to *create and foster* man, her masterpiece. The latter

pursuit, however, Aylmer had long laid aside in unwilling recognition of the truth — against which all seekers sooner or later stumble — that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. Now, however, Aylmer resumed these half-forgotten investigations; not, of course, with such hopes or wishes as first suggested them; but because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana.

As he led her over the threshold of the laboratory, Georgiana was cold and tremulous. Aylmer looked cheerfully into her face, with intent to reassure her, but was so startled with the intense glow of the birth-mark upon the whiteness of her cheek that he could not restrain a strong convulsive shudder. His wife fainted.

“Aminadab! Aminadab!” shouted Aylmer, stamping violently on the floor.

Forthwith there issued from an inner apartment a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace. This personage had been Aylmer's underworker during his whole scientific career, and was admirably fitted for that office by his great mechanical readiness, and the skill with which, while incapable of comprehending a single principle, he executed all the details of his master's experiments. With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that incrustated him, he seemed to represent man's physical nature; *while Aylmer's slender figure, and pale, intellectual*

face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.

"Throw open the door of the boudoir, Aminadab," said Aylmer, "and burn a pastil."

"Yes, master," answered Aminadab, looking intently at the lifeless form of Georgiana; and then he muttered to himself, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark."

When Georgiana recovered consciousness she found herself breathing an atmosphere of penetrating fragrance, the gentle potency of which had recalled her from her deathlike faintness. The scene around her looked like enchantment. Aylmer had converted those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman. The walls were hung with gorgeous curtains, which imparted the combination of grandeur and grace that no other species of adornment can achieve; and as they fell from the ceiling to the floor, their rich and ponderous folds, concealing all angles and straight lines, appeared to shut in the scene from infinite space. For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds. And Aylmer, excluding the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, impurpled radiance. He now knelt by his wife's side, watching her earnestly, but without alarm; for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude.

"Where am I? Ah, I remember," said Georgiana, faintly; and she placed her hand over her cheek to hide the terrible mark from her husband's eyes.

"Fear not, dearest!" exclaimed he. "Do not

shrink from me! Believe me, Georgiana, I even rejoice in this single imperfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it."

"Oh, spare me!" sadly replied his wife. "Pray do not look at it again. I never can forget that convulsive shudder."

In order to soothe Georgiana, and, as it were, to release her mind from the burden of actual things, Aylmer now put in practice some of the light and playful secrets which science had taught him among its profounder lore. Airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her, imprinting their momentary footsteps on beams of light. Though she had some indistinct idea of the method of these optical phenomena, still the illusion was almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world. Then again, when she felt a wish to look forth from her seclusion, immediately, as if her thoughts were answered, the possession of external existence flitted across a screen. The scenery and the figures of actual life were perfectly represented, but with that bewitching, yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow so much more attractive than the original. When wearied of this, Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

"It is magical!" cried Georgiana. "I dare not touch it."

"Nay, pluck it," answered Aylmer, — "pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave noth-

ing save its brown seed vessels ; but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself."

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

"There was too powerful a stimulus," said Aylmer, thoughtfully.

To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention. It was to be effected by rays of light striking upon a polished plate of metal. Georgiana assented ; but, on looking at the result, was affrighted to find the features of the portrait blurred and indefinable ; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.

Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment he came to her flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long dynasty of the alchemists, who spent so many ages in quest of the universal solvent by which the golden principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium ; "but," he added, "a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it." Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the elixir vitæ. He more than intimated that it was at his option to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years, perhaps interminably ; but that it would produce a discord in Nature which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nostrum, would find cause to curse.

"Aylmer, are you in earnest?" asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear. "It is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it."

"Oh, do not tremble, my love," said her husband. "I would not wrong either you or myself by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives; but I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little hand."

At the mention of the birthmark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank as if a red-hot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labors. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer reappeared and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across the kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

"And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-colored liquid. "It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life."

"In one sense it is," replied Aylmer; "or, rather, the elixir of immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom *you might* point your finger. The strength of the dose

would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it."

"Why do you keep such a terrific drug?" inquired Georgiana in horror.

"Do not mistrust me, dearest," said her husband, smiling; "its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this in a vase of water, freckles may be washed away as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the rosiest beauty a pale ghost."

"Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana, anxiously.

"Oh, no," hastily replied her husband; "this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper."

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations and whether the confinement of the rooms and the temperature of the atmosphere agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift that Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air or taken with her food. She fancied likewise, but it might be altogether fancy, that there was a stirring up of her system — a strange, indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself pale as a white rose and with the crimson birthmark stamped upon her cheek. Not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her hus-

band found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of the philosophers of the middle ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar who created the prophetic Brazen Head. All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the Transactions of the Royal Society, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders or proposing methods whereby wonders might be wrought.

But to Georgiana the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career, its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with the circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veriest clod of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, revered Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe

that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter, and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius in whatever sphere might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books," said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you."

"It has made me worship you more than ever," said she.

"Ah, wait for this one success," rejoined he, "then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it. But come, I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me, dearest."

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gayety, assuring her that *her seclusion* would endure but a little longer, and

that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself.

He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal happiness or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous mien that he had assumed for Georgiana's encouragement!

"Carefully now, Aminadab; carefully, thou human machine; carefully, thou man of clay!" muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant. "Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over."

"Ho! ho!" mumbled Aminadab. "Look, master! look!"

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

"Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?" cried he, impetuously. "Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!"

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink; for my share in it is far less than your own."

"No, no, Georgiana!" said Aylmer, impatiently; "it must not be."

"I submit," replied she calmly. "And, Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison if offered by your hand."

"My noble wife," said Aylmer, deeply moved, "I knew not the height and depth of your nature until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being with a strength of which I had no previous conception. I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fail us we are ruined."

"Why did you hesitate to tell me this?" asked she.

"Because, Georgiana," said Aylmer, in a low voice, "there is danger."

"Danger? There is but one danger — that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!" cried Georgiana. "Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!"

"Heaven knows your words are too true," said Aylmer, sadly. "And now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested."

He conducted her back and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure Georgiana became rapt in musings. She considered the character of Aylmer, and did it complete justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honorable love — so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

The sound of her husband's footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet containing a liquor colorless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and *tension of spirit* than of fear or doubt.

"The concoction of the draught has been perfect," said he, in answer to Georgiana's look. "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail."

"Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer," observed his wife; "I might wish to put off this birth mark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die."

"You are fit for heaven without tasting death!" replied her husband. "But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant."

On the window seat there stood a geranium diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a living verdure.

"There needed no proof," said Georgiana, quietly. "Give me the goblet. I joyfully stake all upon your word."

"Drink, then, thou lofty creature!" exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. "There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect."

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

"It is grateful," said she with a placid smile. "Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance

and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset."

She spoke the last words with a gentle reluctance, as if it required almost more energy than she could command to pronounce the faint and lingering syllables. Scarcely had they loitered through her lips ere she was lost in slumber. Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotions proper to a man the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested. Mingled with this mood, however, was the philosophic investigation characteristic of the man of science. Not the minutest symptom escaped him. A heightened flush of the cheek, a slight irregularity of breath, a quiver of the eyelid, a hardly perceptible tremor through the frame, — such were the details which, as the moments passed, he wrote down in his folio volume. Intense thought had set its stamp upon every previous page of that volume, but the thoughts of years were all concentrated upon the last.

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once, by a strange and unaccountable impulse, he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however, in the very act; and Georgiana, out of the midst of her deep sleep, moved uneasily and murmured as if in remonstrance. Again Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the marble paleness of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever; but the birthmark, with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful; its departure was more awful still. Watch the

stain of the rainbow fading out of the sky, and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

"By Heaven! it is well-nigh gone!" said Aylmer to himself, in almost irrepressible ecstasy. "I can scarcely trace it now. Success! success! And now it is like the faintest rose color. The lightest flush of blood across her cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!"

He drew aside the window curtain and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

"Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass!" cried Aylmer, laughing in a sort of frenzy, "you have served me well! Matter and spirit — earth and heaven — have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh."

These exclamations broke Georgiana's sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror which her husband had arranged for that purpose. A faint smile flitted over her lips when she recognized how barely perceptible was now that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer's face with a trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

"My poor Aylmer!" murmured she.

"Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favored!" exclaimed he. "My peerless bride, it is successful! You are perfect!"

"My poor Aylmer," she repeated, with a more than human tenderness, "you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth *could offer*. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying!"

Alas! it was too true! The fatal hand had grappled with the mystery of life, and was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame. As the last crimson tint of the birthmark—that sole token of human imperfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight. Then a hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Appreciation

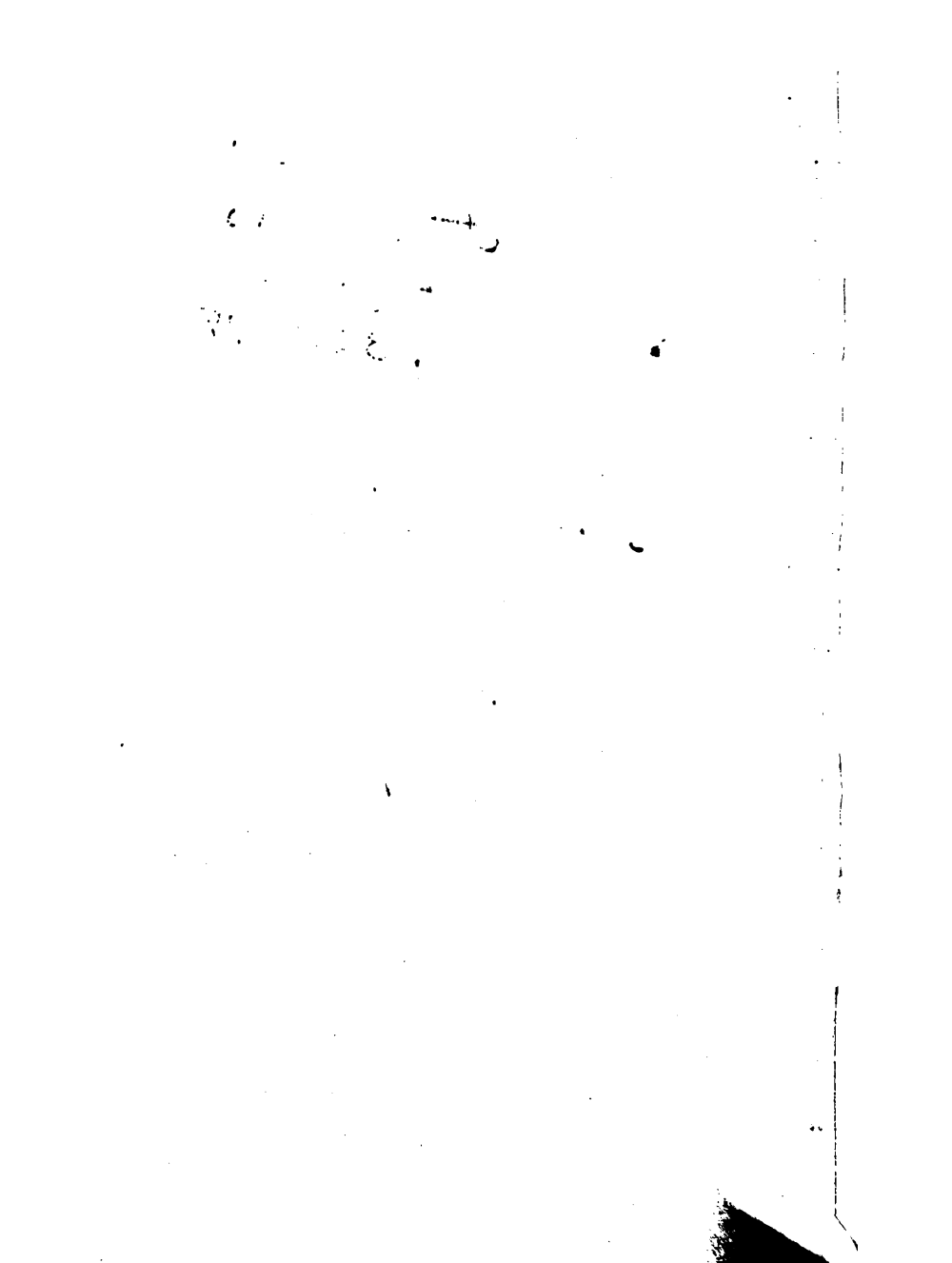
To enjoy this story you should not take the outcome too seriously. Keep in mind that it is purely imaginary. In the author's *Notebook*, where he jotted down themes for stories, we find the following: "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection." This is the theme of the story. In an imaginary story the action must appear to be natural, and there must be sufficient cause in the story itself for the emotions of the characters. The action is placed at such a period in scientific study as to make Aylmer's scheme appear possible. His belief in the symbolic meaning of the birthmark makes his intense feeling in his efforts to remove it seem natural.

Technique

This story is regarded as fully satisfying the requirements of the short story as expressed by Poe in the quotation that you read in the Introduction. You should turn back to that passage and read it again. Point out how the introduction to the story presents only such facts as *bear directly upon the theme*. Trace the action step by step and show how it contributes to the *single effect to be wrought out*: — the conversation about the removal of the mark; Aylmer's thoughts morning and evening; his dream; his making the boudoir; his preparing the magic liquid. Note the increasing intensity of emotion as the action progresses. To complete the work on this story you should make a little study of the words that are descriptive of action and scene.

You began your work in this book with the study of a simple narrative of cattle driving across the plains. Your last story is a masterpiece of imaginative writing by a great author. Perhaps you would like to close your work by assigning a position of comparative rank to all the stories as a test of your ability to tell the difference between what is good and what is best.

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